University of Alberta

Situating Schubert's Ossian Settings: Music, Literature, and Culture

by

Natalie Rebecca Meggison

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Situating Schubert's Ossian Settings: Music, Literature, and Culture submitted by Natalie Rebecca Meggison in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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April 3, 2001

DEDICATION

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew –
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

From *High Flight*
John G. Magee

ABSTRACT

In 1830, the first five of Schubert's settings of texts by James Macpherson were published; very little attention has been paid to these Lieder since. Between 1815 and 1817, Schubert chose to set ten portions of text from *The Poems of Ossian*. These examples of Scottish folk poetry were very much in vogue in Germany, and certainly throughout Europe. Translations existed in many languages and the texts proved to be the germinal idea for myriad works of art, music, and literature. These texts, and the works which have grown from them, are said to embody elements of exoticism, the aesthetic of the joy of grief, and in some cases, Ossianic manner. This thesis explores these elements as they relate specifically to Schubert's settings, by examining the cultural phenomenon of Ossian, the literary and cultural place of the Ossian songs, and Schubert's musical treatment of these unique texts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> I hear the sound of death on the harp. Ossian, touch the trembling string. Bid the sorrow rise; that their spirits may fly with joy to Morven's woody hills.
>
> - Ossian "Dar-Thula," 145-6[1]

Among Franz Schubert's prolific contributions to German Lied is a small collection that has been all but ignored by performers and musicologists alike. Although these songs do not form a cycle and were not intended to be performed together as a set, they are related by the source of the poems used as texts; they are settings derived from small portions of *The Poems of Ossian*. These Lieder are unusual in that they are stylistically different from more conventional Lieder. They do not fall into any one tidy category, with one song often combining characteristics of strophic song, operatic aria, and tragic ballad. Given the somewhat gloomy tone of the texts, and in some cases the sheer length of the settings, an unfavourable modern reception is not surprising. However, the Ossian songs have not always been received so negatively. In 1816, Schubert's colleague Josef von Spaun sent Goethe a letter in which he outlined plans for the publication of a selection of songs Schubert had written using some of Goethe's poetry; the collection was also to include the Ossian songs. In this letter, Spaun remarked:

> A beginning is now to be made with a selection of German songs… It is to comprise eight books. The first two… contain poems by Your Excellency… and the seventh and eighth contain songs from Ossian, these last excelling all the others" (Deutsch 1946: 57).

It should be viewed as significant that Spaun would make such a remark; to include the Ossian songs in such a collection, and further, to claim that they were superior to the rest of it, is to suggest that Schubert's friends thought quite highly of these compositions. This is further significant as it illustrates that in sharp contrast to current opinion, these songs were enthusiastically received, at least in some contexts!

These ten Lieder,[2] composed between 1815 and 1817, are based on what were supposed to be ancient Scottish folk poems. The appearance of this selection of literary works collected and published by James Macpherson caused a furor of debate and artistic activity in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries in Europe. In all, there were six publications, which were later edited and produced in two volumes as *The Poems of Ossian*.[3] Macpherson claimed to be in possession of fragments of ancient manuscripts that were the provenance of Ossian, a third century Celtic bard of the Outer Hebrides. Macpherson further claimed that he had translated these fragments, originally written in Gaelic, and filled in the gaps with orally transmitted stories he had collected. The volumes Macpherson produced were of exceptional quality and garnered the attention of artists, scholars, and readers across Europe. They were engaged by the heroic stories of war, evocative descriptions of an exotic land, and an unfamiliar culture. Soon translations were being produced in many European languages, including French, Italian, Russian, and German; it was not long before these Scottish epics were widely known. They became the germinal idea for myriad works of art, songs, large-scale musical works (i. e., symphonies and operas), and other literary works. Although Macpherson was later

shown to be a fraud and the poems inauthentic, these works had far-reaching effects on the creative output of Europe for at least one hundred and fifty years. This is a phenomenon that has been reasonably well examined and documented from the point of view of literature, but which has received scant attention from music scholars. While not completely ignored, Ossian rarely receives more than passing mention in texts broadly discussing music in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries; a review of the literature yields just five titles dealing exclusively with Ossian and music.

Perhaps the most comprehensive examination of Ossian and music has been presented by Matthias Wessel in his book *Die Ossian-Dichtung in der musikalischen Komposition.* This volume is a general overview of the influence of the Ossian texts on the music of Europe and as such it does not explore any single work or issue in much detail. Wessel broadly discusses the use of Ossian poems in the music of England, Germany, France, and Italy and focuses primarily on their use in opera and other forms of musical theatre. Of particular note is the exceptional bibliography which can serve as a starting point for the exploration of more specific issues. His comprehensive list of musical works inspired by the Ossian texts is especially useful as it clearly illustrates just how widespread and diverse the use of these texts in music has been. Obviously, given its broad scope, a book such as this can not be expected to dwell on specific issues. However, from his work, it is evident that the genre which drew on the Ossian texts most extensively is that of German song between the years 1782 and 1817. Wessel shows that several composers linked to the Second Berlin School (C. G. Neefe, J. F. Reichardt, and C. F. Zelter) were

among the first to use these poems as texts for their Lieder. Although their Ossian settings have not been the subject of extensive study, their role ought to be noted. Their activity in the genre was well known and respected, and through it composers like Schubert,[4] Schumann, and Mendelssohn became acquainted with the possibilities of the Lied and familiar with settings of Ossianic texts. In a similar vein to Wessel's book is Manuela Jahrmärker's *Ossian - Eine Figur und eine Idee des europäischen Musiktheaters um 1800.* Due to the very specific focus on musical theatre, this volume has little to offer an examination of Ossian and the German Lied. Like Wessel, however, Jahrmärker provides a chronology of works composed using some portion of *The Poems of Ossian* as text or atmospheric inspiration.

More directly relevant to Ossian and the German Lied are two articles discussing the work of Mendelssohn and Schumann. In *Mendelssohn and Schumann: Essays on Their Music and Its Context,* R. Larry Todd presents an examination of Mendelssohn's Ossian settings entitled "Mendelssohn's Ossianic Manner, with a New Source - *On Lena's Gloomy Heath.*" He begins by sketching the literary fad of Ossian in German literature, with particular emphasis on the representation of elements that he deems to be exotic. He links the nineteenth century preoccupation with exoticism to the vogue enthusiasm for Scottish ephemera in general, drawing on the contributions of James Fenimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott, as well as that of Ossian or Macpherson. Todd states, "The idea of a primitive heathen culture effaced by the ravages of civilization became an international theme in literature"(Todd 1984: 138). It would appear that Todd is equating "primitive

heathen culture" with the exotic and further, with Ossianic, as his discussion leads directly to an examination of the portrayal of the exotic (i. e., Ossianic) via Mendelssohn's musical setting. For Todd it seems clear that there is a larger phenomenon at work here. There is more to the Ossian poems than evocative text: they evoke as well an exotic, mythical culture. The notion of the exotic nature of these poems is something which was remarked upon by critics when they first appeared, and has continued to be promulgated in the literature today. Todd assumes that because Mendelssohn's works are based on certain texts, the themes present in those texts will be manifested in the music. In doing so, he is implying the composer adopts a manner in these works which is different than that which may be present in his other works.

Is it really possible to say there is a musical manifestation of those characteristics which are Ossianic? There can be no doubt that these poems are evocative, mythic, and exotic, but it seems problematic to assume that because these traits are present in the text, they will also be present in the music. To suggest that a composer has an "Ossianic manner" is to suggest that there is something unique about those compositions; it is also to imply that the composer has other manners, linked to other poets he has chosen to use. In fact, Todd does more than merely suggest; while discussing the influence of the Ossianic texts, he clearly says of Mendelssohn's Scottish works, "on stylistic grounds alone, these works form a distinct group or "manner" in Mendelssohn's oeuvre"(Todd 1984: 138). And, although he concedes that only *Fingal's Cave* and *On Lena's Gloomy Heath* may claim any direct link to the Ossianic texts, the *Scottish Symphony* and the part-song *Jagdlied*

"represent what we may propose as Mendelssohn's 'Ossianic' or 'Scottish' manner: Mendelssohn here achieves his most romantic expression and captures forcefully the exotic" (Todd 1984: 140). Defining what Todd actually means by the term "Ossianic manner" is problematic: he bases his definition on the fact that Mendelssohn traveled to Scotland at a time when "Ossianaism" was popular. He points to Mendelssohn's use of various compositional devices which have become clichéd representations of things Scottish, including use of the following techniques: open spacing, parallel movement in the voice leading, pentatonic or modal melodic ideas, unconventional orchestral colouring, and the use of fanfare motives representing the hunt or battle. He also resorts at times to the use of vague phrases: for example, while discussing *Fingal's Cave* he states, "In his overture Mendelssohn deliberately avoided the traditional and instead sets out to evoke the exotic" (Todd 1984: 142). This may be intentional, as the texts and their origin are shrouded in mystery and scholars seem reluctant (or unable) to clearly define the terms of their studies. This is not to trivialize Todd's work. Despite the tenuous premise, Todd makes a convincing effort to establish the existence of an "Ossianic manner", at least in the work of Mendelssohn. Due to the widespread popularity of these poems, did this mode of composition exist before Mendelssohn and if so, was it manifested in the same oblique fashion? Certainly the questions arising from Todd's work may be examined within the context of the work of others. His discovery of an Ossianic manner in the work of Mendelssohn however, must not automatically be considered as being universally applicable. Perhaps, as Todd has tried to demonstrate

with Mendelssohn, an "Ossianic manner" does exist; however, is it manifest in all compositions using Ossian texts?

John Daverio, in his article "Schumann's Ossianic Manner," attempts a slightly different approach in an effort to establish a source for Schumann's "Ossianism". He begins by establishing the place of Ossian texts as they relate to the compositional practices of composers in Germany in the nineteenth century, suggesting that Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Gade (although Danish) were the leading composers in this area. Daverio provides a very straightforward explanation of the attraction of the Ossianic texts, stating that they "abound in references to the harp and to the power of music to act as a bridge between this world and the hereafter; they clearly invite musical treatment" (Daverio 1998: 249). However, when setting out to examine these musical treatments, he cautions against getting mired in the opacities which accompany anything related to Ossian, including the poems themselves! Daverio suggests that it is not particularly valuable to search for "a direct translation of Ossianic themes into music, or to formulate a hard-and-fast definition of an Ossianic musical manner" (Daverio 1998: 253). This is good news indeed for those who have searched in vain for such manifestations. While outlining the purpose of his study, Daverio suggests a more reasonable activity would be to show "how Ossianic themes, mediated by other poetic conceits, elicited a rich blend of musical responses from nineteenth-century composers" (Daverio 1998: 253). This is particularly applicable to the work of Schumann, since he did not ever compose works based explicitly on Ossianic poetry, but also provides those examining the so-called "Ossianic"

works of others with an alternative method. Despite warning against definability, he examines the Ossianic concept more closely, characterizing it more fully, while still recognizing its variability. He states that he will examine those works of Schumann which are Nordic in character, or which have "in response to the poetic themes in his texts, a more specifically Ossianic manner" (Daverio 1998: 253). Despite his reluctance to define such a term, Daverio acknowledges the existence of such a concept and further, that it is a character particular to a specific body of works.

It seems Schumann was not especially familiar with the Ossian-inspired works of other nineteenth century composers. Daverio suggests that Schubert's song settings were not known to Schumann. However, Schumann was greatly influenced by Gade and began to develop his own "Scottish" style, characterized by elements he admired in Gade's Ossianic compositions. Gade's manipulation of timbre, tone, folk melodies, and national spirit appealed to Schumann, but he was most drawn to Gade's ability to invoke the past with his manipulation of narrative elements. Schumann was able to assimilate this aspect into his own compositions because of the added element of text, which made it much easier for the composer "to step in as narrator" (Daverio 1998: 269). Daverio suggests that Schumann's "Ossianic manner" was an act of preserving the art of telling stories. He cites several conventions used by Schumann to support this claim, including the austere quality of his choral writing, frequent use of folk melodies, his use of narrative voices to draw the participants into the past, and his use of declamatory passages to represent narrative found in the text. Despite this, Ossianic manner remains a nebulous concept

with an elusive definition. Daverio suggests "the Ossianic manner in Schumann's late ballads is an epic manner; practically at every turn the music attempts to emulate the character of the epic genres" (Daverio 1998: 27). Ascribing importance to the literary and cultural context of works born out of the phenomenon of Ossian is a viable alternative to the more traditional methods of searching for "Ossianisms" hidden in the music; regardless, it seems the definition remains obscure.

Despite Josef Spaun's effusive championing of Schubert's Ossian settings, very little has been said about them. Barbara Kinsey obviously noticed this, and in 1973 wrote "Schubert and the Poems of Ossian," which attempts to examine Schubert's Ossian settings and perhaps to place them within a musical context. It is the only article in the literature which attempts anything close to a comprehensive study of these ten songs.[5] Kinsey begins with a brief description of James Macpherson and the poems of Ossian. Any attempt to broach this subject in such a manner will meet with difficulty due to the often ambiguous circumstances of these texts; Kinsey's efforts are no different, and closer examination of Kinsey's work reveals that it is fraught with historical inaccuracies. The song settings of these poems are dependant upon the literary integrity of the poems and the history which they bring with them. However, Kinsey states, "The Germans... [clung] to the romance of the poetry with a strong loyalty. At last they were convinced of the unauthenticity [sic] of the work and the poems sank into obscurity" (Kinsey 1973: 22). By downplaying the significance of the texts as poems in this manner, Kinsey aligns herself with the tradition of musicology which identifies the music as being of prime

importance. Due to the primacy of the texts in these examples of Lieder, they fail - given this model - to be legitimate material for further musicological study.

Kinsey is correct to point out the traits of the Romantic era evident in the poetry, and even to question the origins of these qualities by stating, "It is impossible to tell whether these qualities were created by the Ossianic vogue, or were merely mirrored in the poetry" (Kinsey 1973: 23). Again, however, she is caught by the brevity of her treatment, and rather than exploring this issue via Schubert's use of these texts, she quickly moves on to what proves to be a sketchy examination of the role of translations in the dissemination of the Ossian poems. Arriving at Schubert's settings rather circuitously, Kinsey launches into musical descriptions of each song, with the unexplained exception of the *Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos*. Kinsey begins her descriptions by categorizing Schubert's settings:

> The nine solo pieces may be described as two songs, *Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos, Das Mädchen von Inistore;* five ballads, *Cronnan, Shilric* (sic) *und Vinvela, Lodas Gespenst, Der Tod Oscars, Die Nacht*; one fragment, *Lorma*, and one ballad translated and re-composed with a rhymed and somewhat strophic form, *Kolmas Klage* (Kinsey 1973: 24).

Little evidence is presented for these classifications and her commentary often fails to clarify the role or place of each song either within the larger body of Schubert's life work, or the genre of the Romantic Lied.

Admittedly, Kinsey's attempt presents more questions than it answers, but that should not completely overshadow the fact that she recognized these songs as being worthy of

individual study and began that process by establishing a forum to examine the use of the Ossian poems as song texts. Certainly other Schubert scholars have briefly mentioned the Ossian settings within the broader scope of their studies. For example, in his book *The Schubert Song Companion,* John Reed provides a brief description of each song, while efforts such as Brian Newbould's *Schubert: The Music and the Man* do little more than drop the name of Ossian in a list of poets whose work held Schubert's attention between 1815 and 1818. Sometimes, as with Elizabeth Norman McKay in *Franz Schubert: A Biography*, the Ossian works are mentioned in an anecdotal manner in reference to Spaun's correspondence to Goethe.[6] However, in an effort to examine these songs in the manner of which they are deserving it is necessary to turn to the work of others to establish both a context and a methodology.

In attempting to place Schubert's settings within the context of his own work and the context of the genre of the Lied, it may be useful to adopt a different reading of these texts and their role and significance, and to reconsider the music from these perspectives. Reading the Ossian texts as commentary on the social and political climate of the times may serve as a way of explaining why Schubert chose these texts and why his settings met with an enthusiastic reception by his close friends. David Radcliffe's article, "Ossian and the Genres of Culture," uses Macpherson's work to illustrate how a literary text defines the culture which produced it. However, he grapples with defining the term culture and, when examining texts and culture, prefers to approach texts as a literary history of culture instead of a cultural history of literature. Radcliffe believes culture is

an historical construct, which grew out of the redefinition of civilization. This concept of culture is evident in bardic poetry and how it has come to be disseminated. There was a time when oral ballads were dimly regarded as it was thought they had no historical authority. Writing these tales down and making them more widely accessible popularized them. Radcliffe suggests that the primitive virtues of the culture represented in these texts were thought to be threatened by the imposition of refinement. In writing these tales down, the poems became part of civilization: this was particularly true when they went on to be published. Radcliffe points out, "By converting oral ballads into highly literary epic and elegy... the translator (i. e., Macpherson) presented the poems to the public as the literary monuments of a bygone age" (Radcliffe 1992: 219). To do this, Macpherson took editorial liberties to make popular ballads and supernatural tales, all products of an oral tradition, into "polite structures of epistolary exchange and georgic prospect" (Radcliffe 1992: 218). In effect, through the poetry, a sanitized view of the primitive culture was presented. If Radcliffe's ideas prove to be true, perhaps there is nothing to be gained from making an historical study of these texts. Rather than focussing on what the texts say about a culture in the past, it may be more profitable to view them as commentary on the contemporary culture (i. e., when they were first published), which is exactly what Howard Gaskill explores in his article, "Ossian in Europe."

Gaskill suggests Macpherson's work came at a propitious moment, when the readers of the time would have been receptive to new styles of prose. The appearance of this

traditional figure (Ossian) offered an opportunity for the "combination of the naïve with the sentimental" (Gaskill 1994: 661). These poems appeared not long after the Battle of Culloden (1745), which had caused the traditions of the Gaels of Scotland to be suppressed. A primitive culture was faced with death and the appearance of these texts served as a reminder of what had been destroyed. In addition, Gaskill advances the discussion of the widespread appeal of the Ossian poems. He suggests that the depiction of bleak, oneiric, ghostly environments, and the prevailing mood of heroic despair, alienation, and loneliness represented in the poems, contribute to the aesthetic of the "joy of grief". Gaskill defines the Ossianic "joy of grief" as "not simply [to] a vague mixture of happiness and sadness, but [to] the specific kind of pleasure which results from recalling and reliving … the pleasures and pains of an irretrievable past" (Gaskill 1995: 105). As he points out in "Ossian in Europe" (1994), this is one of the characteristics which contributed to the considerable appeal of these poems for writers of the Romantic era, including Goethe, Schiller, and Herder. There is no doubt that Schubert and his peers were informed of the concept of the "joy of grief," because of their association with the work of these scholars. We do not know specifically what prompted Schubert to choose the texts he did, or to set them in the manner in which he did, but examining them as examples of the manifestation of the "joy of grief" may lend further insight into the place of these songs within the greater context of Schubert's work at that time.

In addition to establishing a context for Schubert's Ossian songs within his own opus, there is also a need to place these songs within the genre of the Lied. Margaret Stoljar, in

her book *Poetry and Song in Late Eighteenth Century Germany: A Study in the Musical Sturm und Drang*, extensively discusses the contributions of the composers of the Second Berlin School. She stresses the need for historical study to find a context for eighteenth century song, formally and socially, noting that text and performance should be "seen as complementary to each other and both as embedded in the social and political realities of their age" (Stoljar 1985: 12). A song is an act of communication; in order to understand the song, it is necessary to understand how the composer, performer, and listener interpret this act of communication and bring that interpretation forward. It is for this reason that Stoljar presents a list of what ought to be examined when coming to terms with the meaning of a song which includes the following: the circumstances of the performance, the rules or customs governing that performance, the physical aspects of the performance (i. e., accompaniments used, environment, etc.), and the reception of the audience (Stoljar 1984: 1). Understanding these elements, Stoljar says, leads to comprehension of "the intrinsic aspects of the poetic material being considered and explained" (Stoljar 1984: 1). She is writing about a group of composers out of whose combined efforts, a new song style was born. She points out that the song albums of André, Neefe, Schulz, and Reichardt

> defined the new type of *Sturm und Drang* song: a work in which poem and setting are written by contemporaries moved by the same desire for a high degree of expressiveness in a form that would allow the greatest immediacy of communication (Stoljar 1984, 35).

Understanding a song requires knowledge of the social climate from which it was born. This idea of looking at the texts and songs within the context of the contemporary period works well with the approach to texts advocated by Gaskill. It therefore becomes

relevant to look to the consumers of songs for ideas on the aesthetic meaning of the songs. Stoljar states that "the process of song does not end with composition but with performance and listening" (Stoljar 1984: 15). These composers were creating at a time when, due to increasing literacy and an emerging middle class, more people were reading and becoming educated and aware; there was a desire to gain a deeper understanding of what came to be understood as the human condition. Like the composers Stoljar discusses, Schubert chose to address that need by setting poetry by contemporary writers to music, hoping to arrive at a style which provided enhanced meaning and enjoyment. In the search for the meaning of songs and the role they play in defining the culture that produced them, these are valid points to consider and should not be confined to the study of song in the late-eighteenth century.

Complementary to Stoljar's approach is the one put forward by Marjorie Hirsch in her book *Schubert's Dramatic Lieder*. She advocates studying songs (specifically Schubert's Lieder) within a musical context defined by the dramatic vocal styles of the period, and endeavours to explore the role of genre as it contributes to the dramatic songs by Schubert. She clearly states, "before a particular song can be understood and evaluated, we must know what kind of work it represents, i. e. what musical traditions or compositional conventions it engages" (Hirsch 1993: 137). Examining Schubert's dramatic songs as they relate to the musical form from which they evolved "offers new insight into individual works and shows their significance to his Lied repertoire as a whole" (Hirsch 1993: 2). In fact, because of the distinctive structure, linguistic style, and

subject matter employed in Schubert's Ossian settings, Hirsch suggests they may form their own unique category of dramatic Lieder. Recognizing and understanding the genre is crucial to understanding meaning communicated by the songs. However, this can be no easy task where Schubert is concerned. His works are characterized by a combination of disparate musical conventions and a blend of dramatic and more traditional lyric genres. Through his efforts, the Lied became a more fluid and adaptable genre, which allowed him the flexibility to include dialogue, effectively portray action, present independent characters, and make use of unusual or irregular forms. All of these elements were well beyond the scope of the well-known strophic song forms, and although other forms, such as Zumsteeg's ballads and Reichardt's declamatory songs were known by Schubert, his efforts greatly expanded the form. Hirsch points out that Schubert did not aim to create a new form (i. e., dramatic song) but that through extensive use of "secco recitative, accompanied recitative, arioso, aria, and folksong [he was able to] convey his conception of the poem to the listener" (Hirsch 1993: 13).

In an effort to explore Schubert's motivation to use the Ossian texts and to understand his musical settings, it is necessary not only to establish a social and cultural context, as Stoljar suggests, but also, as Hirsch advocates, to concurrently establish a musical context. Jeffrey Kallberg supports the approach of both Stoljar and Hirsch in his essay "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," by suggesting that there is a need to look further than the musical characteristics in an effort to establish meaning. He states, "Research into the effects of genre should involve the reconstruction of contexts

and traditions, and the perceptions of composers and their audiences, both historical and modern" (Kallberg 1996: 5). Once these songs have been firmly situated within this larger context, the questions raised by the attempts to define "Ossianism" in the works of other nineteenth century composers can be examined through the work of Schubert. This will be particularly evident if a new reading of these texts is undertaken and pursued from the point of view that they are representative of the primitive virtues of culture and the aesthetic of the "joy of grief."

A cursory review of the literature concerning Ossianic influence, especially in visual art and poetry, reveals that there is a disproportionately small number of scholarly examinations of this same influence in music. This is curious, since the extensive bibliographies provided by Wessel and Jahrmärker reveal that there is no shortage of musical works composed over the past two hundred years which draw on Ossianic influences. It is especially curious that Schubert's contributions to this body of work receive such scant attention when, in fact, Schubert contributed more to this body of compositions than any other composer. Although today they are dismissed for their prohibitive length and passé aesthetic, these songs were highly regarded by Schubert's friends. Using the methods presented by others who have searched for meaning in the Ossian settings of other composers, I will examine Schubert's contributions, to establish what these songs meant for Schubert and his friends: in what manner did these songs convey meaning? I will begin to explore this question by first establishing an historical context for the texts. I believe this is necessary for several reasons: first, these texts by

(or of) Macpherson are not especially well known today. More specifically, the cultural context which informs the meaning of these texts is not widely understood, and it is this aspect of the poems which makes them unique. After this overview of the provenence of the texts I will turn to examine their place, specifically within the oeuvre of Schubert. At a time when he was composing song settings primarily around the poetry of his contemporaries, where Schubert came to know the Ossian poems and why he chose to set portions of them become central questions. In Chapter Three, I will bring together the previously established historical and cultural contexts of the Ossian poems and the desired aesthetic of the period when Schubert wrote the songs settings, to arrive at the literary and cultural places for those settings. Finally, I will turn to the music of Schubert's Ossian settings. I will begin by looking for the presence of those conventions established by other scholars who have searched for an 'Ossianic manner.' I do this to determine if something that can be defined as 'Ossianic manner' can be found in Schubert's settings. I loosely categorize the ten songs according to Marjorie Hirsch's descriptions of dramatic songs and of the three resulting groups, I examine one example from each in some detail. Perhaps there is an 'Ossianic manner' present in the work of Schubert; even if there is not, then we come away with a better understanding of several frequently overlooked Lieder.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

[1] Page references for *incipits* throughout are for: Macpherson, James. *The Poems of Ossian and Other Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

[2] *Cronnan* D282, *Kolmas Klage* D217, *Lodas Gespenst* D150, *Lorma* D327 and D376, *Das Mädchen von Inistore* D281, *Die Nacht* D534, *Ossians Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos* D278, *Shilrik und Vinvela* D293, and *Der Tod Oscars* D375.

[3] See Appendix A.

[4] Schubert was also exposed to the Lied efforts of several Viennese composers of the late eighteenth century. This is explored in West, Ewan. "The *Musenalmanach* and Viennese Song 1770 - 1830." *Music and Letters* 37 (Jan 1986): 37 – 49.

[5] Kinsey suggests there are only nine songs, however, she has failed to recognize that there are two versions of *Lorma* extant, if only in fragments.

[6] Cursory mention of the Ossian songs may also be found in the work of several others, including Capell (1957), Fiske (1983), Hirsch (1993), and Youens (1996 and 1997). These occurrences are brief and frequently dismissive, while Capell concedes there are some moments of beauty in the Ossian songs, "most of them must be relegated to the lumber room of music" (Capell 1957: 93). Youens has very little to say about the Ossian songs, except that Schubert set the songs on the urging of his friends, stating "Still another instance of Schubert's early reliance on the literary enthusiasms of an older generation is the group of nine Ossian settings." (Youens 1997: 106). In his dissertation, Gramit (1987) briefly discusses the Ossian settings, particularly as examples of text about which the Bildung Circle were enthusiastic. This also points to the role Schubert's friends played in influencing his text choices and will be explored further in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

THE CULTURAL PHENOMENON OF OSSIAN: ESTABLISHING AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE TEXTS

> My soul is often brightened with the song; and I remember the companion of my youth. - But sleep descends with the sound of the harp; and pleasant dreams begin to rise. Ye sons of the chace stand far distant, nor disturb my rest. The bard of other times converses now with fathers, the chiefs of the days of old. - Sons of the chace, stand far distant; disturb not the dreams of Ossian.
>
> - Ossian "War of Inisthona,"117-8

The Scottish Highland culture in which James Macpherson was raised, and which his *Poems of Ossian* popularized to an unprecedented degree, underwent tumultous change during the eighteenth century. Widely considered a "wild, remote region, peopled by barbarians who should either be tamed or completely ignored," (Stafford 1988: 8) the Highlands were forcibly assimilated to the rest of Scotland by the English, in a process which culminated in the Battle of Culloden (1746). In this way the Highlanders, accustomed to feudal relations and clan warfare, were forced into "an uneasy friendship with all Scotland" (Fiske 1983: 38). Scotland itself was also being transformed: industrialization not only brought new forms of employment and commerce, but also much more efficient communication. Both the prominence of intellectuals, including Adam Smith and David Hume, and the development of popular newspapers testify to a new openness to education and ideas. Macpherson himself summarized the impact of the change in the "Dissertation" which prefaced the first volume of *Fingal* (1765):

> The genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years. The communication with the rest of the island is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has destroyed that leisure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating the poems of ancient times. Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and seek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain *amor patriae* may sometimes bring them back, they have, during their absence, imbibed enough foreign manners to despise the custom of their ancestors... (cited in Fiske 1983: 37-8).

While Macpherson's somewhat gloomy opinion to this end specifically references Scotland, these changes were not unique to Scotland and certainly the idea of a broadening scope of human knowledge is encountered again and again throughout Europe at this time.

James Macpherson was the product of this volatile period. Born in 1736 in the town of Ruthven in Inverness-shire in the Highlands of Scotland, ancestral home of the highly regarded and powerful Macpherson clan, he was raised in its close-knit, traditional way. Because of the efforts of the English government to stamp out the Highland culture, Macpherson did not study Gaelic at school, but he did speak it at home; it was there that he was exposed to the stories of ancient Celtic heroes. As Stafford points out, "knowledge of the past, of the deeds of one's ancestors, was a vital part of the Highland consciousness" (Stafford 1988: 13). The heroes and their exploits which would later emerge in Macpherson's work were well known to the Highland people, and the stories, both a form of entertainment and a record of ancient history, were passed orally from generation to generation. Of Macpherson's knowledge of these traditions and their importance, Stafford remarks:

> It is not unlikely that when Macpherson came to develop the character of Ossian, he was recalling the old men he had known since his childhood, such as Finlay Macpherson, who lived in Lynaberack, and spent his days and nights reciting Ossianic poetry to friends and neighbours (Stafford 1988: 14).[1]

There seems to be no contemporary evidence that Macpherson was particularly informed about cultural preservation. However, because he was so prolific in his efforts, it would appear he was conscious of capturing some essential part of a culture to which he could claim to belong.

In 1752, Macpherson attended university in Aberdeen, where he studied classics and proved to be a talented poet. He studied with many of Scotland's leading academics, including Thomas Reid, Alexander Gerard, and James Beattie, all of whom had studied with Thomas Blackwell, a leading scholar of Greek studies in Scotland. Blackwell was a popular and influential teacher and it is likely that his influence was felt by Macpherson through the efforts of his own teachers. From them, he learned theories of man and society which were eventually manifest in his Ossian poems. For example, Blackwell was very interested in human capacity and the juxtaposition between "academic pursuits and real life" (Stafford 1988: 29). His interest in physical action was echoed by other academics at the time, and "at Aberdeen, the study of man was a noble pursuit and the desire to find an ideal society of superhuman beings was eventually to find expression in *The Poems of Ossian*" (Stafford 1988: 30). Stafford also suggests that Blackwell had an interest in the relationship which he believed to exist between epic poetry (genius) and

warfare, something which Macpherson could easily identify with, having witnessed the Battle of Culloden.

Shortly after returning to the Highlands in 1756, Macpherson began writing poems in the classical model and experienced some success in having these works published in *Scots Magazine*. Through his early poetry it is evident that he was preoccupied with themes of death, gloomy atmospheres, and Highland life; clearly, the style of the Ossian poems was being established in this early work. As Stafford notes,

> the contrast between a happy past and a miserable present is a persistent theme in Macpherson's work and was to find its fullest expression in Ossian's 'tales of the times of old'. The celebrated 'joy of grief' that was to accompany Ossian's nostalgic songs also seems to be anticipated ... (Stafford 1988: 45).

Macpherson took an interest in the local area and in Highland culture and began to travel throughout the Highland and Hebridean regions, collecting manuscripts of ancient Gaelic poetry. In fact, given the repression, and indeed the demise, of Highland culture and the Gaelic language, there was a widespread general interest in preservation and celebration of the traditions, stories, and language. The idea of cultural preservation had been initiated in the sixteenth century by James MacGregor, the Dean of Lismore, whose collection of poetry was published as *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Stafford 1988: 89). Because of MacGregor's book and the efforts of others before him, Macpherson met with cooperation and enthusiasm during his collecting excursions, although the active collection of stories, poems, and songs was not being widely practiced. It has been suggested that in addition to collecting actual manuscripts, he took dictation from oral

recitations, creating a written record of stories which were faced with extinction (Stafford 1988: 66). But he was not indiscriminately rewording stories; Macpherson and other Highland writers of the time romanticized the ancient culture of the Celts. Stafford suggests that Macpherson felt justified in combining whatever remains he was able to find into coherent pieces of prose. Macpherson himself refers to this in the introduction to *Temora*, stating "the story of the poem, with which I had long been acquainted, enabled me to reduce the broken members of the piece in the order in which they now appear" (quoted in Stafford 1988: 124-25). They were looking to the past for heroes and noble warriors at a time when Scotland, and in particular the Highlands, were vulnerable and needed the preservation of such stories to affirm their attachment to their particular traditions and regional culture.

In 1759, the Scottish playwright John Home visited the Highlands. After meeting Macpherson, he asked to see examples from his collection. Initially, Macpherson was reluctant, particularly since Home did not read Gaelic. However, Home persisted and Macpherson eventually obliged. Home enthusiastically received Macpherson's translations and took them back to Edinburgh where he showed them to Hugh Blair, who was also very impressed with what he read and asked to meet Macpherson. Macpherson was again reluctant and puzzled by the attention. He felt that "no translation of his would do justice to that spirit and fire of the original" (Stafford 1988: 78). His reluctance was increased by the fact that he never studied Gaelic, and although he could speak the language, he did not have a solid knowledge of its mechanics. Nevertheless, Macpherson

did meet with Blair, and that meeting led to the 1760 publication of fifteen poems in a pamphlet titled *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Galic or Erse Language*. Macpherson worried about public reception and was particularly concerned with scorn from Lowland and English readers. Much of his concern stemmed from a worry that the poetry was originally intended to be oral. In trying to illustrate this, Stafford questions on Macpherson's behalf:

> Should the heroic traditions of the Highlanders be made accessible to outsiders? ... There was no guarantee that the Lowlanders would respond to the ancient poems with the appropriate respect ... The Gaelic tradition was totally different from the English, so Macpherson was doubtful whether the simple ballads would impress readers used to the elaborate literature of English and classical authors (Stafford 1988: 80).

However, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* attracted the attention of the reading public and developed the expectations about the nature of ancient Gaelic poetry and the culture that had produced it. The themes presented by the poems in this collection would be developed further in the epics of *Fingal* and *Temora* and provided the initial material for what would later become *The Poems of Ossian*.

The enthusiastic reception of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* is evidenced by the need for a second edition in October 1760, only four months after its first publication. Soon after the publication of this work, Macpherson was encouraged to tour the Highlands and the Hebrides to collect more poetry and to search out the lost epic of Fingal. Unable to afford such a journey, Macpherson initially rejected the idea. However, Hugh Blair arranged for financial support, which enabled Macpherson to travel for a period of six months. Again, he was met receptively by the communities and individuals he visited, and being able to

speak Gaelic, had little difficulty understanding the people. Because the bardic tradition and clan system were disappearing and with them the oral preservation of history, poetry, and stories, Macpherson's activities were viewed as a valuable step in the preservation of these traditions. His efforts were particularly supported by academics like Hugh Blair, who advocated the importance of the poems because they came from "the most early state of society" (Stafford 1988: 99).

Early in 1761, Macpherson travelled to England armed with the spoils of his collecting trip. However, it was not until December of that year that *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, In Six Books: Together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian the son of Fingal* was finally published. Throughout this volume, Macpherson took editorial liberties by bringing together several short fragments to form the lengthy episodes.[2] He drew on his education in classics, and as Stafford points out, "echoes of Homer, Virgil and Milton could be heard faintly in the *Fragments*, but in *Fingal* the debts were more pronounced" (Stafford 1988: 137). It should also be noted that Macpherson was eager to appeal to his readers and would alter names and details to make the stories more interesting or relevant; further, "the stories were too simple and terse, so he made them more romantic" (Stafford 1988: 128). Despite, or perhaps because of, Macpherson's editorial liberties, this volume initially met with much enthusiasm both in Scotland and abroad.

Although Macpherson received enthusiastic response from most readers, there were individuals who were doubtful about the authenticity of his work. In particular, response

from the literary world was tepid and several scholars wrote extensively about their doubts;[3] over time, public enthusiasm for these poems waned. Critics questioned Macpherson's works and Macpherson failed to produce original manuscripts in Gaelic, but no one ever proved without a doubt that Macpherson wrote the poems himself; the issue of the authenticity of these texts is complex and ambiguous. In Macpherson's defense, Stafford suggests that there is no doubt that he did collect manuscripts and make written records of oral recitations. However, she goes on to suggest that while the Highlands and Hebrides no doubt provided the raw materials, the end product was something much more modern and shaped by Macpherson for the enjoyment of his readers. Certainly, the question of authenticity raises problems and questions unique to these texts. While it is not my intention to downplay these concerns, they are not particularly central to this study. Although there is little doubt that it was the very belief in the authenticity of these poems which lead to their popularity, in Scotland the poems were widely accepted as being fabricated by Macpherson by the time their popularity reached its zenith in the rest of Europe.

The widespread appeal of the *Poems of Ossian* is evident, as they became the germinal idea for myriad other works, particularly during the period of 1790 to 1820 (Wessel 1994: 251-2). This popularity was fuelled throughout Europe by the eventual availability of translations, beginning in 1763 when Melchior Cesarotti translated *Fingal* into Italian. Over the next twenty to thirty years, the texts spread throughout Europe and America, being translated into many languages, including German, French, Danish, Russian,

Dutch, Bohemian, and Hungarian. As Howard Gaskill points out, "the most obvious reason for limited dissemination was the great difficulty experienced on the Continent in actually procuring copies of the poems..." (Gaskill 1994: 647). English editions were particularly rare; the first continental English edition appeared anonymously in Darmstadt in the mid-1770s. Gaskill suggests that the most influential and complete translations to eventually appear were "Denis's German (1768/69), Cesarotti's Italian (1773[dated 1772]) and Le Tourneur's French (1776/77)" (Gaskill 1994: 648). However, the translations were fraught with problems independent of the authenticity scandal. Questions arose as to the accuracy of the translations since many were made not from English editions, but from those in other European languages. Further, in 1773, Macpherson published a new edition which was quite different from the first and which he claimed he "ran over ... with attention and accuracy; and he hopes, he has brought the work to a state of correctness, which will preclude all future improvements" (cited in Gaskill 1996: 409). However, it is unlikely that this corrected edition enjoyed timely dissemination in the rest of Europe and translators no doubt continued to produce volumes based on the first, and presumably flawed, edition.

The dissemination of Macpherson's work through translations led to something of a literary phenomenon. Roger Fiske suggests that "during the fifty years and more when his reputation was at its zenith, he was far more highly regarded than Shakespeare or any other British writer" (Fiske 1983: 33). This leads one to question what was particular about these texts which caused this to be so. Although this has been considered by many,

there does not seem to be any one satisfactory answer. The poems appeared at a propitious moment, which Gaskill suggests was a time when "the jaded palate of the mid-eighteenth century reader was certainly open to alternative tastes..." (Gaskill 1994: 661); the appearance of Ossian offered a sort of antidote to advancing civilization. These stories were collected in an effort to preserve some shred of the disappearing Highland culture. This was a sentiment which could be appreciated not solely by readers from that region. In fact, readers from the Highland culture or those with a particular attachment to this culture only comprised a small fraction of the audience which was reading and responding to Macpherson's work. The poems were also commentary on "what has had to be destroyed (i.e. primitive culture) in order that civilization should advance" (Gaskill 1994: 662). Gaskill's remark echoes the sentiment, which was being expressed by German writers of the late-eighteenth century. Although he was not writing specifically of the Ossian poems, Schiller expresses a similar idea to Gaskill's in his essay on "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" (1795). He states, "to escape the sterility and fragmentation of the present, we must recapture what we have lost from our earlier selves: 'our culture should lead us back to nature along the path of reason and freedom'..." (cited in Sheehan 1989: 330). In fact, the Ossian poems may be read on a variety of levels and this no doubt contributed to their widespread appeal.

Certainly the appeal of Ossian was not confined solely to the recreational readers of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. It has already been mentioned that in their respective books,[4] Matthias Wessel and Manuela Jarhmärker present extensive

bibliographies of compositions for musical theatre (i.e., opera, drame lyrique, parody, Singspiel, etc.), Lieder, choral music, instrumental, and program music, which all claim connection, directly or indirectly, with the Ossian poems. These compositions began as early as 1768 with François-Hippolyte Barthélémon's *Oithona*, a dramatic poem set to music and based on texts from *Fingal*. The phenomenon continued as composers from many countries encountered these poems in a variety of languages. The last entry in the bibliography of Jahrmärker's book is for a song for soprano and viola written by Peter Kiesewetter in 1991. However, the period of greatest activity was the early-nineteenth century, evidenced by Wessel's *Chronologische Übersicht,*[5] which lists ninety-seven works composed between 1790 and 1820; Schubert contributed ten Lieder to this body of work.

The poems presented in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry,* although simply constructed, present a tone of despair. While they may not be accurate translations from the Gaelic, they do present a blend of "traditional styles and modern preoccupations" (Stafford 1988: 93) which may have contributed to the broad appeal for readers of the period. The texts all share the same pervasive sense of doom, highlighted by gloomy atmospheres and overbearing misery and suffering, particularly when love is involved. As Stafford observes, "love seems unable to flourish in Macpherson's Caledonia. Instead of normal sexual activity, the lovers are united only in violent death, sleeping together not in bed, but in the grave" (Stafford 1988: 105). Certainly sentiment such as this contributed to the concept of the Ossianic "joy of grief," an aesthetic which was influential in the

nineteenth century. The themes presented in the lengthier works are no different, and due to the scale of these works the sentiment is magnified. The presentation of a wild and uncontrolled period in history when clan loyalties ran high, where healthy young heroes fought for the name of their clan, where tragedy played a central role in every story (and was celebrated for the depth of that element), culminates in what Stafford calls a "brooding indulgence of morbid eroticism" (Stafford 1988: 105). These stories were celebrated for their pathos and it was exactly this quality which caused the stories to continue to be celebrated through the nineteenth century. As pointed out in Chapter 1, Howard Gaskill, supports these poems are manifestations of the aesthetic of the "joy of grief" which he refers to as "the decidedly mixed pleasure of nostalgia" (Gaskill 1994: 672). The pathos found in these texts anticipates and is representative of those qualities with which the Romantic era was concerned. Again, it is acknowledged that these poems are not merely historical documents or vestiges of the ancient oral tradition. Instead, "Macpherson skillfully plays on the sensitivities of all who feel themselves subjected to an alien cultural hegemony, who share a sense of grievance at being cut off from their own putative patrimony by a history which is always written by the winners" (Gaskill 1994: 666). This was true for the people of Germany in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, who were searching for roots for their own national literary traditions[4]; in the Highland culture they recognized many of what they imagined to be their own traits of vigour, social feeling, and primitive virtue.

The late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century saw a Germany that was divided into many small and independent states. Because of this political separation, commerce and industry were also divided. There were no unifying policies and trade was hampered by a lack of state regulation. Sheehan notes, "the same geographical, political, and technological barriers that divided Germans into separate social and economic units kept them apart culturally" (Sheehan 1989: 146). Due to the political climate of the time, the German people assimilated an enormous amount of French culture, including language, food, literature, and fashion. The move toward German nationalism or patriotism did not come until toward the end of the eighteenth century when scholars and writers such as Schiller, Goethe, and Herder began to develop and disseminate their philosophies of man and nation. In particular, it has been suggested that Herder was the "the father of cultural nationalism" (Koepke 1996: 181). Herder wrote extensively on the development of nationalism and what constitutes culture. He urged the people of Germany to develop themselves as individuals, which would support the awareness of a national culture. Herder believed that the lack of a unified and common culture would be the demise of Germany; "without a common 'German' spirit and patriotism, based on a revitalization of language and literature, central Europe would remain in a backward and decaying state" (Koepke 1996: 183). One way in which Herder sought to encourage the creation of a unified German culture was through the publication of various collections and essays concerning folk literature, poetry, and song, including *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, a compilation of folk songs and poetry from a number of countries. He strongly believed the study of literature from other cultures would aid in the establishment of a set of

German characteristics. Herder believed in the value of folk literature, which "he regarded as a genuine expression of the consciousness of a nation" (Beiser 1992: 207). The relevance of *The Poems of Ossian* is immediately evident. These poems were the product of a culture believed to be unified through the commonality of language, stories, and national heroes. The culture had been weakened and taking up ancient traditions was an effort to salvage the idea of a cohesive culture.[7] Because of the relative success of Scotland in developing a strong sense of nation, Herder strongly urged the people of Germany to collect poetry, stories, and songs of *their* past. Such collections could serve as evidence for German heroes, national mythology, and the existence of a culture which perpetuated such traditions.

These conditions made Ossian particularly popular in Germany in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Reviews appeared in in magazines in the mid-1760s, bringing Ossian to the attention of readers in Germany (Fiske 1983: 44). Initially, only small excerpts of the poems were presented, until 1769, when Herder encountered Michael Denis' translation, the first in German. This translation was not well received by many, including Herder, who criticized Denis for disrupting the lyricism of Macpherson's work by employing German hexameter, but Herder's encounter was pivotal for the reception of Ossian in Germany. He went on to produce his own translation, as did Goethe, Lenz, Bürger, and Stolberg, although, as Gaskill points out, "it may ... be considered unlikely that the translations, as literary achievements in themselves, exerted great productive

influence in Germany" (Gaskill 1994: 654). Nonetheless, the following list of German translations bears witness to the longevity of the interest in Ossian in Germany:

Denis, Michael. *Die Gedichte Ossians eines alten celtischen Dichters...* Vienna, 1768/69.
Harold, Edmund de. *Die Gedichte Ossian's eine alten celtischen Helden und Barden.* Düsseldorf, 1775.
Denis, Michael. *Ossians und Sineds Lieder.* Vienna, 1784.
Rhode, J. G. *Ossian's Gedichte. Rhythmisch übersetzt.* Berlin, 1800.
Stolberg, Friedrich. *Die Gedichte von Ossian dem Sohne Fingals.* Hamburg, 1806.
Jung, Franz Wilhelm. *Ossian's Gedichte.* Frankfurt am Main, 1808.
Schubart, Ludwig. *Ossian's Gedichte, nach Macpherson.* Vienna, 1808.
Ahlwardt, Christian Wilhelm. *Die Gedichte Ossians. Aus dem Gaelischen.* Leipzig, 1811.
Perière, J. F. Arnauld de la. *Die Gedichte Ossians, neu übersetzt.* 817-19.
Förster, L. G. *Ossians Gedichte. Neu übersezt.* Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1826/27.
Brinckmeier, Eduard. *Ossians Gedichte. Rhythmisch bearbeitet.* Braunschweig, 1839.
Böttger, Adolf. *Ossian deutsch von...* Leipzig, 1847.

A more comprehensive bibliography of translations and other writings of and about the influence of Ossian in Germany may be found in Rudolf Tombo's 1901 publication, *Ossian in Germany: Bibliography, General Survey, Ossian's Influence Upon Klopstock and the Bards.*

It was fortuitous for the fate of the German literary culture that *The Poems of Ossian* appeared when they did. Further, that one so fervently championing the reform of German literary tradition as Herder would take such an active interest in these texts was particularly opportune. Shortly after encountering Ossian, Herder introduced the texts to Goethe who also became a champion of Ossian. While both Herder and Goethe tried

their hand at translating the Ossian texts, it was Herder's 1771 essay, *Briefweschsel über Ossian*, which brought Ossian to the attention of German writers of that period. Fiske points out that, "in the 1770s every young German writer destined for fame saw Ossian as an important and fascinating seminal influence" (Fiske 1983: 46). *The Poems of Ossian* reached great heights of popularity in Germany, even after they had fallen out of favour with the rest of Europe.

Herder was one of the leaders in the movement that became known as *Sturm und Drang*, and his essay on Ossian was one of the important texts to emerge from this movement. The *Sturm und Drang* movement was described as one which "championed the independence of faith from reason, the role of feeling in art and morality, and the significance of national as opposed to a cosmopolitan identity" (Beiser 1992: 191). The period, characterized by the desirability of art forms and literature "to frighten, to stun, to overcome with emotion" (Heartz 1980: 311), grew from a movement toward sentimentality or *Empfindsamkeit*. Gothic novels were popular and poems displaying elements of primitivism or exoticism were sought. Dramatic realism was fostered through the portrayal of turbulent, tragic moods; a pervasive tone of melancholy was highly valued! It was the *Sturm und Drang* movement which precipitated the popularity of certain literary forms and the development of certain musical forms; it fuelled the creative efforts of the early part of the nineteenth century. Through this period, many popular and influential writers found their voices. They were able to shape a new direction for literary development in Germany. Through widespread dissemination of

their work and ideas due to improved methods of publishing and book selling, Goethe, Herder, Schiller, and others were able to guide the tastes of both the reading public and emerging authors and artists. They were able to prepare readers for a certain variety of literature which embodied the *Sturm und Drang* aesthetic. This was a view supported and encouraged by Herder. As a staunch advocate for the establishment of a national culture unified by common experience, Herder believed cohesion came, in part, from *Bildung*, or "free individual development unfettered by restrictions imposed by church and state authorities, yet guided by teachers and masters" (Koepke 1996: 179). The study of *Sturm und Drang* aesthetics through *Bildung* became quite popular and because *The Poems of Ossian* were particularly indicative of these ideals, they became popular material for study. Rudolf Tombo suggests that the "pathos and tenderness exhibited in the poems of Ossian attracted attention from the very beginning and this very pathos and sentimentality and melancholy did much to establish Ossian in the popular favor" (Tombo 1966: 75-6).

The effects of the *Sturm und Drang* aesthetic, and indeed that of *The Poems of Ossian*, were noted by Schubert and his colleagues; they were very concerned with, among other things, the plight of man in society. It was in the writings which emerged from this movement, that this group of men founded the principles on which their group, later known as the Bildung Circle, became grounded. Spaun, in a letter to Schober, outlines their aim, stating:

> We must study humanity, and all ages, and what the best people of the past did and through, and how one thing leads to another, and how one

> thing follows out of another, so that we can understand clearly and have a positive influence on the people we love... (cited in Gramit 1987: 35).

Like so many others, they found support for their aim and fuel for their discussions of culture and civilization, both ancient and modern, in the Ossian texts. Schubert's contribution was to present these texts in such a way so as to musically exploit the aesthetic of the "joy of grief" for the edification of his peers.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

[1]Stafford cites this as evidence from Alexander Clark of Ruthven, found in MS 73.2.12f55/3 from the Advocates Library, National Library of Scotland.

[2]For example, Macpherson presented Fingal as a figure of Scottish origin when, in fact, he was Irish.

[3]For a comprehensive bibliography, which documents this controversy, see Black (1926) and Dunn (1971).

[4]See Chapter 1 above.

[5]Wessel (1994): 251-253.

[6] See Sadie, Stanley and John Tyrrell, eds. New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed. London: Macmillan, 2000 [database online]. S. v. "Nationalism: Cultural Nationalism and German Romanticism," by Richard Taruskin. See also Sheehan (1989), p. 144ff for a more detailed examination of the state of German culture in the early part of the nineteenth century.

[7] See page 20 and 24 above.

CHAPTER 3

SEEKING A LITERARY AND CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR SCHUBERT'S OSSIAN SETTINGS

> The clouds of night come rolling down and rest on Cromla's dark-brown steep. The stars of the north arise over the rolling of the waves of Ullin; they shew their heads of fire through the flying mist of heaven. A distant wind roars in the wood; but silent and dark is the plain of death.
>
> - Ossian "Fingal Book VI," 99

Susan Youens states that, "Lieder begin with words; they are born when a composer encounters poetry" (Youens 1997: 99); nor do they die when the composition process is complete. The process of song requires performance and reception (Stoljar 1985: 15). It would not be wise to suggest that the music is ancillary, but the Lied must be seen as more than just a musical genre; it is a fusion of elements of which music is just one. Text and music must be seen as being complementary; further, these elements are firmly entrenched in the social practices of the culture which produces them. Efforts to understand the aesthetic phenomenon of the solo song must not undermine the importance of the social and literary traditions out of which it was borne. As Youens points out, "song composers tend to search a variety of sources for new and old poetry to convert into Lieder; if they do so in special ways and for specialized reasons, they are nonetheless *active participants in the literary milieu of their day*"[1] (Youens 1997: 99). In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the motivation of composers to work in this manner was enhanced by the emerging public interest in the value of literacy.

Germany, in the late-eighteenth century, saw economic developments transpire which ultimately changed the demographic of the reading and musically literate public. These included improvements in the printing of books and music, which lead to more widespread dissemination through the growing commerce of the book trade (Böwker 1991: 75). In particular, the market for music was dominated by middle class, amateur musicians who were variously accomplished. In an effort to address the needs of this population and with hopes of advancing the cause of musical literacy, composers began to write songs that were easily accessible in both text and degree of musical difficulty. Stoljar states that the composers of this period "cultivated an unadorned, immediately appealing kind of song which they called *Lieder im Volkston*, songs in the popular style, meant to be accessible to all" (Stoljar 1985: 11). That being said, Stoljar is quick to point out that these songs are indeed "art-songs and have very little to do with the mode of folksong; they owe their origin to middle class not peasant life" (Stoljar 1985: 11).

During this period, which began in approximately 1770, the educated middle class began to see music as a mode for cultivating themselves. This meant that composers working in this cultural environment were faced with satisfying the musical demands of this population. It was a period of transition, involving composers, poets, stylistic changes, and advancements too numerous to be discussed within the scope of this paper. However, there were several key figures who played a role crucial to the development of the genre of solo song. This list of composers is extensive, but includes the composers of the Second Berlin School. Much has been written about this particular group, the

advances they made to the genre of German solo song, and indeed, of the contributions they made to the advancement of the German literary culture.[2] Of this group of composers who preceded Schubert in Lieder composition, Brian Newbould points out that, they "were not giants but a handful of writers celebrated for *little other*[3] than their trend-setting Lieder" (Newbould 1997: 43). While it is true that these composers were not "giants" in composition, and are not celebrated today for their great masterpieces, Newbould unjustly denigrates their contributions to the genre of solo song. The genre might well have taken a very different direction had it not been for their "trend-setting" efforts. In particular, three composers of the Second Berlin School, J. F. Reichardt, C. G. Neefe, and C. F. Zelter, made remarkable contributions to forward the direction of solo song. As Stoljar points out, the song albums of the composers of this group "defined the new type of *Sturm und Drang* song, a work in which poem and setting are written by contemporaries moved by the same desire for a high degree of expressiveness in a form that would allow the greatest immediacy of communication" (Stoljar 1985: 35). Stoljar's remark perfectly illustrates the aesthetic the leaders of the *Sturm und Drang* movement advocated. The desire of composers for a "high degree of expressiveness" matched with listeners who sought pleasure from the portrayal of dramatic action easily enjoyed from the comfort of one's salon.

Johann Friedrich Reichardt was perhaps the most prolific composer of the Second Berlin School, as he produced over a thousand examples of solo song. More significant than his

prodigious number of songs, however, were the essays Reichardt wrote in which he called for more simplicity in song, while challenging strophic composition "for its inevitable artificiality in adapting each stanza to the same melody" (Stoljar 1985: 192). Reichardt was particularly concerned that solo song be reflective of genuine emotion. He was abreast of the rising enthusiasm in Germany for folk poetry, folk songs, and, in general, the natural expressiveness of simple sentiment; it is for this reason he became a leading song composer of the *Strum und Drang* movement. While he did not always follow his own prescriptions for the simplification of song composition, he called for more widespread use of conventions such as unaccompanied melodies to enhance accessibility. The aim was to change methods of solo song writing in such a way to reflect the changes in the type of poetry being chosen for use as texts and to make songs more accessible to a wider audience.

The contemporary poetry which Reichardt chose to set reflected the shift in the German aesthetic consciousness and it follows that song composition would change to reflect and support this phenomenon. Reichardt was, of course, familiar with Herder and his stance regarding the cultural place of poetry, which had become representative of the German literary tradition. This is apparent in Reichardt's choice of texts for his *Oden und Lieder* of 1779-1781, which included translations by Herder of works by Percy, as well as texts by Klopstock, Goethe, Hölty, and others. While he wrote only one setting of the Ossian poems, a long ballad titled *Ossian*, Reichardt was instrumental in advancing the aesthetic movement of which those poems were a part. His solo songs were indeed "trend-setting"

and it is in part due to these trends that Schubert and his friends would align themselves with this movement in German culture, both philosophically and musically.

Christian Gottlob Neefe was a leading composer of new song styles based on contemporary poetry during what has been called the "age of sentiment". Neefe was concerned with the primacy of text in song; because of this, he was able to create a form "entirely faithful to the principle of expressiveness which is central to the musical aesthetic of the period" (Stoljar 1985: 95). He advanced the idea of the importance of studying the words of a poem before making an attempt to sing them, or perhaps more importantly, before attempting to set them to music. This approach demonstrates his willingness to "apply his art together with another to create a new form, rather than using a literary text as a kind of formal framework around which to build a musical construction" (Stoljar 1985: 98). His compositions embody the direction of solo song at that time, portraying drastic moods, sentimental emotion, and other elements of popular text choices; by elevating the importance of the poetry as text, Neefe was advancing a standard of song writing.

There are two composers of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries whose contributions and influences presented themselves more in advances to the form of the Lied. Although younger than the other composers discussed here, Carl Friedrich Zelter was more conservative, choosing to remain more allied to the simpler style advocated by the First Berlin School. Between 1810 and 1813, Zelter published his *Sämtliche Lieder,*

Balladen und Romanzen in four volumes. It is clear from the simple, strophic style of these songs that he was catering to the taste of the amateur performer (Hirsch 1993: 25). Newbould points out that Zelter won Goethe's approval because of his particular ability to set that poet's texts in a simple, strophic manner, which Goethe believed to be most fitting for his work (Newbould 1997: 44). Zelter did, however, produce some works of a more dramatic nature. Perhaps the most significant example in this context is his setting of *Kolma: Ein altschottisches Fragment aus der Lieden der Selma des Ossian.* This work uses a text that Goethe had translated from *The Poems of Ossian*, and which is included in his *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (Hirsch 1993: 26). Indeed, there can be no question that Schubert was familiar with Zelter's musical settings; no doubt he turned to Zelter's examples as a place from which to launch his own dramatic scenes.

The fourth composer, Johann Rudolf Zumsteeg, was particularly known for writing ballads and dramatic scenes. He carried on in the manner established by his peers, choosing to set texts by contemporary poets like Schiller and Goethe or those which were currently in vogue such as *The Poems of Ossian.* Zumsteeg's work with ballads greatly impressed Schubert and "served as a model for his own Lieder" (Hirsch 1993: 26). The ballads produced by Zumsteeg were usually through-composed works, often drawing on epic stories as sources for texts. He frequently employed text painting as a way to musically illustrate the dramatic elements of the text (Hirsch 1993: 69). Zumsteeg's works were popular and widely performed; it is documented that Schubert was well acquainted with Zumsteeg's work. Joseph Spaun made particular reference to this

awareness in his 1829 obituary "On Schubert". He speculated that Schubert's knowledge of Zumsteeg's work directed his own efforts, pointing out that "Zumsteeg's songs, with which he became acquainted already as a boy and which specially appealed to him, may have had some influence on his predilection for German song, which began to develop so early" (cited in Deutsch 1946: 865-882). Testament to the validity of this statement is found in the work of Schubert, several of whose early forays into the ballad form are directly based on setting of Zumsteeg's, among them *Hagars Klage*. But, as Hirsch points out, these songs were not "slavish imitations" (Hirsch 1993: 71). Schubert wanted to build on Zumsteeg's accomplishments, as noted by Spaun in 1829: "He wanted to modernize Zumsteeg's song form, which very much appealed to him" (cited in Deutsch 1946: 865-882).

Clearly, Schubert 'inherited' a song form greatly advanced from its simple beginnings. However, he was not solely informed by the efforts of those composers who worked with the form before him. David Gramit, drawing on the work of Carl Dahlhaus, points to "the pervasive influence of middle class culture and institutions both on musical activity and on contemporary perceptions of that activity" (Gramit 1993: 355). He cautions against being too quick to isolate Schubert from his peers and examines the role Schubert's friends played in shaping his prolific contribution to the genre of the Lied. Although Gramit is particularly concerned with Schubert's settings of texts from Mayrhofer's *Heliopolis*, these same concerns should be applied to his Ossian settings. The merging of literary, social, and musical elements becomes particularly relevant when

trying to place these settings. The manner in which Schubert came to select the Ossian texts is exemplary of a composer being "active in the literary milieu" of his time and responding to his public's (or in Schubert's case, his circle's) current passions. It is for this reason that Schubert's relationship with his friends is of particular importance. His associations began while he was still a student at the Stadtkonvikt, where he first met Josef Spaun and Josef Kenner. These men took an active interest in Schubert, who was significantly younger, and encouraged his musical efforts. Later, with Johann Mayrhofer, Anton Spaun, Anton Ottenwalt, Johann Senn, Franz Schober, and Leopold Kupelwieser (among others), Spaun and Kenner formed the group known as the Bildung Circle. As Elizabeth McKay points out, this bonding of young men based on "intense personal relationships, affection, and openness, and cultivating idealistic theories" (McKay 1996: 45) was not uncommon during this period in German-speaking areas. The friendship which Schubert cultivated through this circle of men was strong. Each man, at some point, played a significant role in either Schubert's creative output or in helping him maintain an acceptable standard of living. It does not seem particularly necessary to explore the role of each friend individually, however it should be noted that the members of the Bildung Circle were, for the most part, part of the upper middle class culture. They were reasonably affluent and well-educated, often holding positions as government officials, lawyers, etc. Gramit points out this group had access to the "intellectual heritage" of the late-eighteenth century. He suggests, "by accepting Schubert as one of their number they made available to him a body of ideas and literature to which he was otherwise unlikely to have been exposed thoroughly" (Gramit 1987: 74).

While this group of men may now seem to be little more than a highbrow gathering of dilettantes, they ardently upheld the aesthetic beliefs of the group and enthusiastically supported the artistic pursuits of those among them who were so inclined. The ideal of self-improvement through self-education was popular in late-eighteenth century Germany, having been initiated and supported by Herder.[4] This particular group of men were brought together through their common belief that they could better themselves and indeed society as a whole, through the pursuit of those things which were 'good'. Considerable time was spent reading the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of Herder, Schiller, and Goethe. There was emphasis on studying the classics and, in an effort to guide the direction of the group's discussion, specific questions were formally provided for consideration (Gramit 1987: 43); of course, from this activity much debate and discussion ensued. The direction of the circle's activities was explicitly laid out in a letter of Anton Spaun to Schober, quoted above in Chapter Two, which continues:

> Beauty too influences human hearts powerfully, refreshingly, and upliftingly, and the sounds of music, a Madonna by Raphael, an Apollo, the song of a divinely inspired poet, all pull heavenwards with an unknown power; therefore let us too dedicate our lives and flee nothing so much as an excess of destructive passions and the deficiency and emptiness of an indolent spirit (cited in Gramit 1987: 35).

In their search for beauty, the group encountered the works of myriad "divinely inspired poets" of which Macpherson was one. In his work, the friends encountered a seemingly endless supply of poems exploring concerns which included themes of love/death, as in *Cronnan* where Vinvela waits in vain for the return of her beloved Shilric and, believing he is dead, dies herself:

O Shilrik, ich bin allein, allein in der Winterbehausung.
Ich starb vor Schmerz wegen dir.
Shilrik, ich lieg' erblaβt in dem Grab.[5]

As examples of "heroic deeds of brave and virtuous youths" (Gramit 1987: 102), the *Poems of Ossian* would have held much appeal for the group. This example also illustrates the highly melodramatic tone frequently encountered throughout the poems. Macpherson expressed each action, each emotion, each physical description with such vigour that the Circle would have been immediately drawn in. The pervasiveness of the aesthetic of the "joy of grief," both within the text and in the reader's response to the text further solidified the *Poems of Ossian* as "the song of a divinely inspired poet."

Another example, taken from *Kolmas Klage*, presents a tone of despair which pervades the work:

Geister meiner Toten,
Sprecht vom Felsenhügel,
Von des Berges Gipfel,
Nimmer schreckt ihr mich!
Wo gingt ihr welcher Höhle,
Soll ich euch nun finden?
Doch es tönt kein Hauch.[6]

The suggestion of a harsh landscape, peopled by ghosts, immediately stands out as a feature which made these texts popular. Not as readily recognizable, but equally interesting to the reader of the period, is the sort of dark pleasure the narrator gains from his despair. Knowing that grief and gloom were sought in art and literature at this time, it is easy to see from this example why these texts were so popular. The *Poems of Ossian* fed the early Romantic enthusiasm for pathos, which would later lead to the popularity of

Victorian 'horror' and ghost stories. By this time, Herder's advocacy for the exploration of ancient culture, of both Germany and abroad, was also widely disseminated. Those who searched for examples of the "joy of grief" also coveted that which could be construed as exotic. People were looking for examples of primitive cultures that would help to illustrate Herder's ideas. In addition to addressing the emotional aesthetic of readers of the period (or at least a part of it, for it should be noted that these same readers and music listeners also immersed themselves in other genres including lyric poetry), *The Poems of Ossian* were explicitly representative of a primitive culture. This further contributed to the appeal of these texts; reading these poems allowed readers to have some experience of the exoticism of this primitive culture without ever leaving the comfort of their homes. Ossian was in vogue and as such there can be little doubt Schubert was motivated to set those particular texts, at least in part, by the enthusiastic urging of his friends.

It should be noted, that while outwardly the Ossian songs (and indeed, the texts) appear to be long, bleak, and often desperate in their tone, there is a more positive undercurrent – one of heroism and the honour that accompanies battle. Often, the main story is of a war where one or more great warriors are killed; frequently their love interest dies from grief upon hearing the news. The following example, from *Der Tod Oscars* clearly illustrates many of the key plot elements, including a battle (or war), the death of a hero, and honour in battle:

> Der Held, o Alpin Erzeugter, fiel nicht
> Friedlich, wie Gras auf dem Feld, der
> Mächtigen Blut befärhte sein Schwert, er

Riβ sich, mit Tod, durch die Reihen ihres
Stolzes, aber Oscar, Erzeugter von Caruth
Du bist unrühmlich gefallen! Deine Rechte
Befleckte das Blut deines Freunds.[7]

This example is particularly grim; not only was a war hero struck down in battle, he was killed by his friend who is then disgraced. The fact that each story exploited the heroic activities of ancient warriors furthered the appeal. Gaskill observes "The melancholy pleasure derived from the prospect of falling heroes is … central to the attraction of Ossian" (Gaskill 1995: 113). This links the appeal back to the "joy of grief" and while these texts are not the first to present bleak and heroic descriptions, the sheer volume of such material in these poems obviously contributed greatly to the popularity of the song settings. Evidenced by Spaun and Holzapfel's enthusiastic championing, Schubert's Ossian settings were well received by his friends.[8]

While there is no doubt Schubert was motivated to some degree by his friends to set particular texts, it is likely he exercised a degree of judgement himself. This issue has been explored by Susan Youens, who suggests Schubert's choice of poems was directed by the music in the poem; a poem was found to be acceptable "as long as the poem had music in it, *his* music" (Youens 1997: 99). Perhaps it is for this reason Schubert's choice of texts encompasses a wide ranging literary gamut, including examples of *Sturm und Drang* poetry, pre-Romantic verse, examples of romanticism, etc. (Youens 1996: 36). *The Poems of Ossian* is an epic work, containing endless examples of heroic epics, love stories, representations of ancient cultures, and more. That Schubert chose only nine

fragments is curious, and his motivation for doing so can only be speculated upon. He may have been prompted to do so through reading Goethe's *Die Lieden des jungen Werther*, though the guidance of his circle, or through an independent decision based on the German vogue of the Ossian poems. It is known that Schubert used the German translation published by Edmund de Harold as his source. This is evidenced by a remark written by Schubert's friend, Anton Holzapfel, where he states, "I lent him an old and, as I heard afterwards, miserable translation of Ossian ... which I had bought from a second-hand bookseller for a few pence and on which, unfortunately, he lavished a number of his most talented works" (cited in Fiske (1983): 84). Youens suggests Schubert's choice of these poems as texts is based on "Schubert's early reliance on the literary enthusiasms of an older generation..." (Youens 1997: 106). Given the social and cultural climate at that time, there is little doubt those characteristics which members of the Circle held in esteem were the same as those which drew Schubert to set portions of the poems; as suggested by Gramit, "the combination of these heroic examples, with the epic, exotic tone, rich in powerful images, that the poems of Ossian offered made them particularly attractive to Schubert and his friends" (Gramit 1987: 103). It is known that Schubert's texts were, for the most part, taken from Harold's translation. However, it is possible, due to the popularity of the poems, that Schubert was familiar with more than one edition, and took his own liberties with the text. Portions of text will be considered more deeply in relation to the corresponding musical treatment in the next chapter.

The texts which Schubert chose to set to music have been excerpted from larger works, although he did not use any material from the epic *Temora* and used only one small excerpt from the first book of *Fingal*; perhaps the epics, being so long and complicated, were not suited to his taste or his genre. It is more likely, however, that Schubert was responding to suggestions from his peers. Elizabeth Norman McKay remarks "poets he was introduced to by friends, especially at meetings of the Bildung Circle, accounted for most of the other Lieder.... Macpherson's Ossian texts (10), [were introduced to him] between 1815 and 1817..." (McKay 1996: 49). Although they may all be traced to more complete sources within *The Poems of Ossian*, several of the texts Schubert chose appear in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry...* as short excerpts:

Kolmas Klage D217 (June 1815) - Fragment X
see also *Song of Selma*
Cronnan D282 (September 1815) - Fragment II
see also *Carric - Thura*
Shilrik und Vinvela D293 (September 1815) - Fragment I
see also *Carric - Thura*
Der Tod Oscars D375 (February 1816) - Fragment VII
see also *Temora*[9]

Because of this, it may seem as though Schubert was actually only familiar with *The Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. However, according to Holzapfel, Schubert was in possession of a complete copy of *The Poems of Ossian*. This is further supported by the fact that the five remaining text choices came from a variety of poems:

Ossians Lied Nach Dem Falle Nathos D278 (1815)
Dar - thula
Das Mädchen von Inistore D281 (September 1815)
Fingal (Book 1)
Lorma D327 (November 1815), D376 (February 1816)
The Battle of Lora

Lodas Gespenst D150 (January 1816)
Carric - Thura
Die Nacht D534 (1817)
Croma[10]

As it is widely known that Schubert created several song cycles, it would be reasonable to imagine there would be some element of cycle in the Ossian songs. The songs date from 1815 to 1817 and it is possible Schubert was beginning to experiment with cyclic process at that time. Richard Kramer, in *Distant Cycles: Schubert and the Conceiving of Song,* explores the elements of cycle in Schubert's compositions, beginning with his settings of *Der Jüngling am Bache*. Three of these songs were composed between 1812 and 1819, the time frame within which the Ossian songs are also grouped. The idea of 'Ossian songs as cycle' could be further supported by the fact that the Ossian poems are linked by their thematic content. Despite this thematic link, however, it appears Schubert was selective in the poems from which he drew excerpts. While it would not seem unreasonable for one to speculate on cyclic process in Schubert's Ossian settings, it is likely he did not intend to compose a cycle with this odd collection of fragments; certainly this would be worthy of further exploration at a later time.

In working to establish a cultural context for Schubert's Lieder, and in particular his Ossian settings, his group of friends must be seen as more than a group of passive admirers who were willing to provide Schubert with material comforts and necessities to facilitate his creative efforts. Because they formed themselves in a sort of society, they may, in fact, be seen as collaborators in shaping the direction of the artistic pursuits of at least a small portion of their society, Schubert's included. The particular role of

Schubert's circle of friends played is summed up by Gramit, who suggests that, "its members both provided song texts and collaborated on operatic projects and introduced Schubert to the poetry of their own acquaintances" (Gramit 1997: 62). This, coupled with the legacy of the song composers who came before him, provided Schubert with the tools to create something which would meaningfully contribute to the efforts of improvement which his friends were so passionately pursuing. The result was a body of musical compositions tailored to the interests of these friends; their enthusiasm for them suggests his success in meeting their needs, even if the songs have been received far less favourably since that time.

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[1]Italics mine.

[2]See Stoljar (1985) for a comprehensive survey of the contributions of these composers.

[3] Italics mine.

[4] See page 37 above.

[5] Above I am, O Shilric; alone in the winter house. With grief for thee I fell. Shilric; I am pale in the tomb.

[6] Ghosts of my dead, Speak from the rocky hillside, From the mountain top; You will never frighten me! Where are you gone to rest? Ah, in what cave Shall I find you now? But there is no sound.

[7] But, son of Alpin, the hero fell not harmless as the grass of the field; the blood of the mighty was on his sword, and he travelled with death through the ranks of their pride. But Oscar, thou son of Caruth, thou hast fallen low! No enemy fell by thy hand. Thy spear was stained with the blood of thy friend.

[8] See page 1- 2 and page 29 above.

[9] Many references point to *Temora* as a source for Fragment VII, however, *The Death of Oscar* does not appear in the completed epic of *Temora*. It was to have been the first book of the whole poem, but Macpherson was forced to admit that the Oscur of Fragment VII was a different hero with a similar name and therefore not Ossian's son.

[10]This text is not actually part of the body of the poem *Croma*. It is part of a story, *The Six Bards*, which is attached as a footnote to *Croma*.

CHAPTER 4

SCHUBERT'S OSSIANIC MANNER: ESTABLISHING A MUSICAL CONTEXT FOR THE OSSIAN SONGS

> The moon came forth in the east. The king returned in the gleam of his arms. The joy of his youths was great; their souls settled, as a sea from a storm. Ullin raised the song of gladness. The hills of Inistore rejoiced. The flame of the oak arose; and the tales of heroes are told.
>
> - Ossian "Carric-Thura," 161

Jeffrey Kallberg begins his book, *Chopin at the Boundaries*, with an examination of genre, how it is defined, and how it works. He asks, "how can ideas of genre help us understand the piece?" (Kallberg 1993: 4). While his particular challenge is to better understand Chopin's *Nocturne in G Minor*, his ideas can be just as easily applied to Schubert: what did Schubert hope to communicate through genre in the Ossian songs? To answer this question, it must first be accepted that Lieder may be considered a genre, one which may be most effectively viewed as a composite of distinct styles. However, Kallberg does not view genre strictly as a musical construct. He suggests genre ought to be "perceived as a social phenomenon shared by composers and listeners alike" (Kallberg 1993: 4). He views genre as a communicative concept, one that "actively informs the experience of a musical work" (Kallberg 1993: 5). Kallberg advocates viewing genre as a contract between the listener and the composer, the idea being that the composer uses conventions particular to a genre while the listener interprets these conventions based on conditioned responses. However, contracts may be broken or details of the contract may

be altered. As Kallberg states, "the rejection of the prescriptions of a genre by a composer can be seen as a major force in the promotion of change" (Kallberg 1993: 6). There are myriad ways in which this can occur and Kallberg explores several used by Chopin. There is no doubt this altering of expectations was also practised by Schubert. Viewing genre in a less rhetorical, and perhaps more traditional, manner does not allow for the social and musical aspects of a composition to be considered together. However, there can be little doubt about the significance of the listener with regard to Lieder and indeed the Ossian songs of Schubert. Examining the Ossian songs in light of what Kallberg presents allows musical phenomena to be examined as intrinsically social. Understanding what the listeners of the day agreed to expect will aid in illustrating what Schubert hoped to communicate through his Ossian songs.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the generation of composers of German song preceding Schubert established a framework of compositional conventions for composers and baseline expectations for listeners. Their use of these conventions fuelled enthusiasm for what was to become a very adaptable musical genre. Although the rules for composing Lieder would undergo revisions at the hand of Schubert and his successors, the idea of songs composed with the intention of transmitting or highlighting the aesthetic of a text became a widespread trend. Lieder were characterized by the brevity of each setting. They were pieces of chamber music; interplay between piano and voice was absolutely essential for this mode of song writing, and communication, to be successful. But what were these conventions, what had listeners come to expect from a presentation of Lieder? From the First Berlin School (F. Benda, J. F. Agricola, C. H. Graun, C. P. E. Bach et

al.)[1] listeners would have come to expect the aesthetic advocated by C. G. Krause, the idea that Lied ought to be 'folk-like', easily accessible to all, while continuing to portray the pervading mood or meaning of the text. The compositions encountered as a result of this were unsophisticated harmonically and rhythmically; they were generally diatonic and quite short. From these simple forms grew the more complex works that were characteristic of the Second Berlin School. The listeners came to expect more complex structures melodically, rhythmically, and/or harmonically. Accompaniments became more important and instead of strictly strophic songs, listeners were often presented with modified strophic or through-composed songs. Listeners' expectations were slowly changing and growing, but it must be noted that there quickly came to be sub-genres, or categories of songs, which on a very basic level were Lieder but which also possessed qualities that distinguished them as distinct and unique in their own manner. Indeed this phenomenon is evident in the work of Schubert and is directly relevant to the study of the Ossian songs.

Schubert clearly inherited a form rich with possibilities, but his predecessors in the genre were not his only influences. Opera and other theatrical productions played a significant role in shaping the direction in which Schubert took Lieder, as he developed more dramatic forms of Lieder based on those he observed in large-scale works. Given the development of the genre to this point, it will be useful for the purposes of this study to accept 'dramatic song' as a distinct category of Lied. Songs which may be termed 'dramatic' are generally seen as those which are not strophic and/or which are not based directly on folksong forms. These dramatic songs are patterned on poetic devices, using

a mixture of recitative and arioso passages to portray and advance the dramatic action of a particular text. The subject matter of songs defined as 'dramatic' tends to be episodic in nature; it is not uncommon for such works to begin *in media res*. In these cases, Schubert created a musical equivalent to episodic texts, ensuring the dramatic quality of the text would be preserved while at the same time creating a form which was significantly more theatrical than traditional strophic Lied. Marjorie Hirsch, in her book *Schubert's Dramatic Lieder*, not only advocates the recognition of dramatic songs as a distinct form of Lieder, that is, as a group of songs which do not fit the traditional category of Lied, but asserts there are further sub-categories: dramatic scenes, dramatic ballads, and mixed-genre Lieder (which is further broken down into lyrical songs with dramatic traits, dramatic songs with lyrical traits, and lyrico-dramatic songs). This manner of categorization proves to be a useful framework within which to situate Schubert's Ossian settings to facilitate definition and further examination.

Schubert was certainly not the first composer to write dramatic songs. The influence of composers from the Berlin School has been noted and certainly a number of the composers associated with that School wrote in dramatic forms. However, critics were skeptical of this type of song. As Hirsch points out, they felt some texts were "too intimately connected to their dramatic context and could not be understood when removed from it"(Hirsh 1993: 27). Certainly this could be said to be true for Schubert's Ossian settings, as each song used but a small portion of epic poetry as text. Examining the particular manner in which a text is musically set, however, shows that the dramatic context is essentially redefined. Listening to the musical setting of a text produces a

much different reaction than simply reading that same passage of text. While he may not have done so in precisely the same manner in which meaning was originally created, Schubert, for example, was able to create forms which enable the creation of a new context that effectively highlights meaning. In an effort to understand these new contexts and meanings, I will follow Kallberg in shifting the focus from just the music and broadening it to encompass those peripheral elements which merge together to inform meaning.

I have chosen to categorize Schubert's Ossian settings according to Hirsch's three types of dramatic songs (dramatic scenes, dramatic ballads, and mixed-genre Lieder), although due to their subject matter and, in most cases, epic proportions, they resist categorization. Schubert wrote a large body of dramatic monologues and dialogue Lieder, which Hirsch has classified as dramatic scenes. To be included in this category, a song must portray some degree of dramatic action: "in dramatic scenes, the words are ostensibly spoken by one or more usually identifiable personae who act out a particular episode. Action occurs" (Hirsch 1993: 17). Typically, dramatic scenes are quite lengthy, to enable a sufficient amount of dramatic action to be presented for the song to make sense to the listener. *Hagars Klage*, *Philoktet*, *Antigone und Oedip*, and *Ganymed* are all examples of dramatic scenes; clearly this is a bringing together of works of epic proportions!

Three of Schubert's Ossian settings may be added to this list of dramatic scenes: *Cronnan*, *Die Nacht*, and *Shilrik und Vinvela*. *Cronnan* was written on 5 September 1815, and is considered by many to be one of the most successful of Schubert's Ossian

efforts; Reed states, "Cronnan is one of the best of the Ossian songs" (Reed 1997: 71). Reed also claims that it embodies Schubert's 'Ossian style'. *Cronnan* was written for solo voice and piano, although it is a dialogue between Shilric and Vinvela.[2] The text is taken from *Carric-Thura* and is a continuation of the story which begins with the portion of text used for *Shilrik und Vinvela*. The song is 'sung' by Cronnan, a bard who is telling the story of Shilric and Vinvela through the use of direct speech. Shilric has returned from battle to discover that Vinvela is dead from grief, having believed that Shilric was dead. Seeing Vinvela's ghost, he pleads with her to return to him. Because the story is being told by one bard, the text is presented by Macpherson as prose. However, Schubert chooses to exploit the episodic nature of the text and through alternating use of recitative and arioso passages highlights the presence of two distinct *dramatis personae*. The text is comprised of five distinct episodes, each identified in the score by the character whose voice is being presented:

> (*Shilric*)Yes, my fair, I return; but I alone of my race. Thou shalt see them no more; their graves I raised on the plain. But why art thou on the desert hill? Why on the heath alone?
>
> (*Vinvela*)Alone I am, O Shilric! alone in the winter – house. With grief for thee I expired. Shilric, I am pale in the tomb (Macpherson 1996: 160).

Knowing the desired aesthetic of the period, it is not difficult to understand the potential attraction of these texts for both Schubert and his companions. Earlier in the text, in a portion not set to music, the narrator (presumably a bard) is quite explicit when speaking of the ghosts of absent warriors. He states, "Pleasant is the joy of grief! it is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak and young leaf lifts its green head" (Macpherson 1996: 158). And, while the example here is certainly not the most

melodramatic, it presents elements of gloom and grief. In particular, the line "With grief for thee I expired" is an example of the expression of grief and melancholy which was highly sought after. The idea of being alone only heightens the expression of grief. What furthers the attraction of these texts is their relative straightforwardness as poems or even prose. There is nothing hidden in the meaning; there is no requirement for the reader, or indeed, the listener, to have to read into the text to discover the sentiment and meaning; however, this is not to say the poems are simple. The excessively descriptive nature of the texts would have provided much appeal to readers of the period. It ought to be noted that Schubert's publisher, Diabelli, while finding enough merit with this setting of *Cronnan* to include it as number one in Book 2 of the *Nachlass*, found it necessary to take considerable liberties with the text. The publisher's version appears today in the Peters Edition of the score, and while the text is quite different in places, its meaning is not altered in any significant manner.

Not as highly esteemed is the setting of *Shilrik und Vinvela*. This song was composed on 20 September 1815 and in terms of dramatic action, precedes *Cronnan*. There is not widespread agreement as to the classification of this song. It shows characteristics of a ballad, however it is undoubtedly a dialogue between Vinvela and Shilric, again presented as a work for solo voice and piano, with the solo voice being representative of the bard Cronnan. Although the text is dramatically charged, with grief-stricken Vinvela believing Shilric is dead, it is generally felt that this song lacks the dramatic conviction of *Cronnan*. Obviously in keeping with the text used for *Cronnan*, the text here is also episodic and presented as prose. Again, Schubert set the text as five distinct passages,

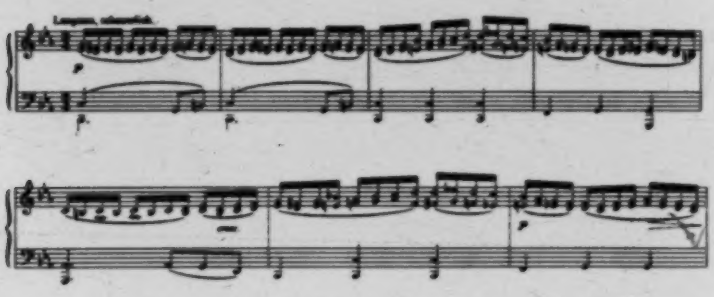
exploiting the distinct and alternating voices. It is not known why Schubert chose to go back and set the first part of this story. Perhaps his listeners found *Cronnan* to be lacking plot cohesion and their desire for background to the story was met with this setting.[3]

The third Ossian setting to fall into the category of dramatic scene is *Die Nacht*. This song was not written until February 1817 and is, in fact, Schubert's "last and most interesting attempt to exploit the popular appeal of the Ossian myths" (Reed 1997: 175). Unfortunately, Schubert did not complete this setting, and as a result of Diabelli's editorial attempts, the provenance of the published edition is obscured. The text for this song comes from a footnote found attached to the poem *Croma*. It is the story of five bards who stop to visit a Chieftain; each bard takes a turn describing and commenting on the night. There are six distinct and lengthy pieces of prose which make up this story, but Schubert chose only two for this setting: those of the first bard and the Chieftain. The first bard describes the night as he experiences it: alive, dark, gloomy and full of ghosts. He asks his friends to take him in from the night. The second and third describe a scene similar to that of the first, as does the fifth bard. The fourth bard does not wish to seek refuge from the night because to him night is calm and beautiful. The Chief calls for song and dance and the telling of stories to pass the night, saying they will hunt again in the morning. *Die Nacht* is a dramatic scene in that it presents a dialogue of sorts between two characters. The action is found in each bard's description of the night and later in the Chief's call for levity. However, it is perhaps due to the sheer length of the text that Schubert chose to stop where he did; maybe he lost interest. One can only guess at the

epic he might have arrived at, as the song as it is presently published lasts for over eight minutes!

Of the three dramatic scenes, I have chosen to single out *Cronnan* for closer examination because it best illustrates Schubert's use of various compositional conventions to both highlight and subvert accepted characteristics. Schubert used a variety of compositional techniques to musically highlight the dramatic nature of his chosen texts. In *Cronnan* for example, Reed notes various 'quasi-Wagnerian' conventions which Schubert used and which he feels define his 'Ossianic style' and point to thoughts of an epic dramatic work; this includes various repeated motifs which can be likened to the Wagnerian tradition of leitmotifs. Like the themes found in any poetic work being considered for musical setting, Ossianic themes brought about a musical response.[4] In the example of *Cronnan*, this musical response seems manifest in Schubert's use of tone painting. Indeed, Reed remarks on Schubert's use of "undulating thirds and sixths [to portray] the mist and the upward-curving semi quavers, usually in thirds, which stand for Vinvela's loyalty and beauty" (Reed 1997: 71). Of course, there are commonly accepted occurrences of tone painting in Schubert's work and some are found here. For example, Schubert used sixteenth notes to represent wind in more than one song. These devices do not make the work uniquely Ossianic and are exactly the vague sort of descriptions that Daverio cautions against becoming mired in.

While the opening of *Cronnan* does not stand out as a musical representation of any physical detail of the text, it establishes a tone or mood which may in fact be described as

hazy or mysterious. This is supported not only by the particular rhythmic figure of undulating sixteenth notes, but also by the harmonic structure.

Example 1: *Cronnan* m. 1 – m. 7

Although the underlying harmonic structure is quite straightforward, the use of repeated intervals of thirds and sixths clouds the opening key; strong closure is avoided. There are various indications that the piece begins in c minor, however, the beginning of this piece is comprised of a series of deceptive and evaded cadences; a cadence on E-flat major finally occurs at m. 21. The mood established here pervades the work as the harmonic structure remains vague. Modulating through a series of key areas, Schubert deviates from the opening tonality only to return to it twenty-two measures from the end, with the return of melodic and rhythmic figures found in the introduction. The vague harmonic structure presented in *Cronnan* would not have been expected by listeners, but while Schubert does not use specifically folk-like melodies in this setting, the lyric passages are reasonably simple and he makes use of repeated motifs, a convention listeners would have been familiar with from early examples of Lieder.

The presence of narrative voices and the widespread use of recitative to highlight narrative aspects of the text in this song are clear examples of those conventions which

Daverio claims are characteristic of "Ossianic manner" which he finds in the music of Schumann. As previously pointed out, the text represents one voice unfolding a story of two people. The song has been constructed to exploit the presence of the two voices, beginning with a long section by Shilric. The rising monotone beginning creates a feeling of accompanied recitative. This is followed by many alternating short passages of arioso and recitative, all by Shilric; Vinvela's voice is finally presented at m. 74.

> (Shilric) Aber ist sie es, die wort wie ein Strahl des Lichts auf der
> Heide erscheint? (Recitative)
> Kommst du, o Mädchen, über Felsen, über Berge zu mir,
> Schimmernd wie im Herbste der Mond, wie die Sonn'
> In der Glut des Sommers? (Arioso)
> Sie spricht; abeert wie schwach ist ihre Stimme! Wie das
> Lüftchen im Schilfe der See. (Recitative)
>
> (Vinvela) Kehrst du vom Kriege schadlos zurück?
> Wo sind deine Freunde, mein Geliebter?
> Ich vernahm deinen Tod auf dem Hügel;
> Ich vernahm, ihn und beweinte dich! (Arioso)[5]

Schubert uses recitative liberally throughout this song, not to highlight any particular meanings of that text, but rather to reveal its structure: the recitative is dispersed throughout Shilric's passages, as though the arioso passages are his silent thoughts, punctuated by thoughts expressed aloud (i.e. the recitative). The absence of recitative in Vinvela's speech suggests that arioso was indeed used by Schubert to represent the 'ethereal.' After her initial appearance, Shilric does not yet realize she is not alive and addresses her with the question "Aber warum bist du am Hügel der Wüste? Warum allein auf der Heide?." Her reply, in arioso, tells him she is not alive and the remainder of the song is a lengthy passage of arioso, wherein Shilric longs for Vinvela's return. This passage further serves as a textual return, as the last portion of text is similar to the first:

(Opening-Shilric) Ich sitz' bei der moosigten Quelle; am Gipfel des stürmischen Hügels. Über mir braust ein Baum. Dunkle Wellen rollen über die Heide. Die See ist stürmisch darunter. Die Hirsche steigen vom Hügel herab. Kein Jäger wird in der Ferne geseh'n. Es it Mittag, aber Alles ist still.

(Ending-Shilric) Ich will sitzen bei der moosigten Quelle, am Gipfel des stürmischen Hügels. Wenn Alles im Mittag herum schweigt, dann sprich mit mir, o Vinvela! komm auf dem leichtbeflügelten Hauche! auf dem Lüftchen der Einöde komm! las mich, wenn du vorbeigehst, deine Stimme vernehmen, wenn Alles im Mittag herum schweigt![6]

The music also rounds off, ending as the song began, with a portion of arioso and a brief coda for the piano alone. Altering the text to fit a pre-determined musical form was not necessary; instead, Schubert shaped the music to illustrate the form of the text and to highlight the ethos of the passage.

Certainly it is no great surprise to find examples of ballads within the Ossian settings. Because of certain characteristics found in these songs, they may be further classified as dramatic ballads. Dramatic ballads, according to Hirsch, are "throughcomposed settings of poetic texts in which the words and actions of a small group of identifiable characters are related by an anonymous narrator" (Hirsch 1993: 64), although the narrative mode is not often highlighted. Usually, such ballads present a single event with the story *in media res*, move toward a climax, and end as abruptly as they begin. Like dramatic scenes, dramatic ballads are often epics, as evidenced by the three Ossian settings which can be classified in this way: *Lodas Gespsenst*, D. 150; *Lorma*, frag. D. 327, 376; and *Der Tod Oscars*, D. 375. Of the three listed here, *Lodas Gespenst* is well known, despite being one of the longest, taking about ten minutes to perform. The text comes from *Carric-Thura,* and represents the third portion of this poem set by Schubert. Because

Carric-Thura was published as a long piece of prose, it does not lend itself particularly well to musical treatment. However, this particular portion consists of eight distinct sections which serve not only to break up the text, but also to outline the presence of two characters in the story. This structure provided Schubert with a framework upon which he could impose his musical structure. As with the dramatic scenes, there is a blend of recitative and arioso, although as Reed points out, "the story is told almost entirely in accompanied recitative, with the piano playing the part of linking narrator" (Reed 1997: 326). Despite the fact that two voices are present in the text, Schubert did not identify them as he had in *Cronnan* or *Shilric und Vinvela*; the narrative aspect of this portion of text is repressed. After sifting though the dense atmospheric descriptions, readers and listeners uncover the dramatic action. The story details an encounter between Fingal and the spirit of Loda. Fingal strikes down the ghost and great rejoicing ensues:

> The spirit of Loda shrieked, as rolled into himself, he rose on the wind. Inistore shook at the sound... they rose with rage; all their arms resound... The hills of Inistore rejoiced. The flame of the oak arose; and the tales of heroes are told (Macpherson 1996: 161).

While the previous example from *Cronnan* was positively rife with grief and melodrama, this excerpt is full of the vigour of battle. The texts are quite extravagant in their expression of the *Sturm und Drang* aesthetic. The very open celebration of the "joy of grief," the impossible love relationships, a seemingly endless string of wars, heroes, and ghosts - any one of which would contribute to an engaging text - all flow together in what constitutes a literary spectacle.[7] Having the opportunity to vicariously live these adventures from the comfort of home was a form of entertainment to the readers of the period. Gramit suggests that in addition to a class of "elite" readers, there was a larger class, "whose reading is devalued, and the literary elite vigorously condemned the

'reading mania' that seemed rampant among those whose literary tastes were perceived to be less refined and for whom reading was ... a distraction and an incentive to idleness" (Gramit 1995: 154). Although Schubert's circle certainly viewed themselves as part of the elite readership, their enthusiasm for these songs suggests that they too read for entertainment and enjoyment, savouring the exploits of long dead war heroes, as readers or listeners. Heightening the drama through the musical setting of these texts, as Schubert did, is no doubt a great part of that which contributed to their enthusiasm for these songs.

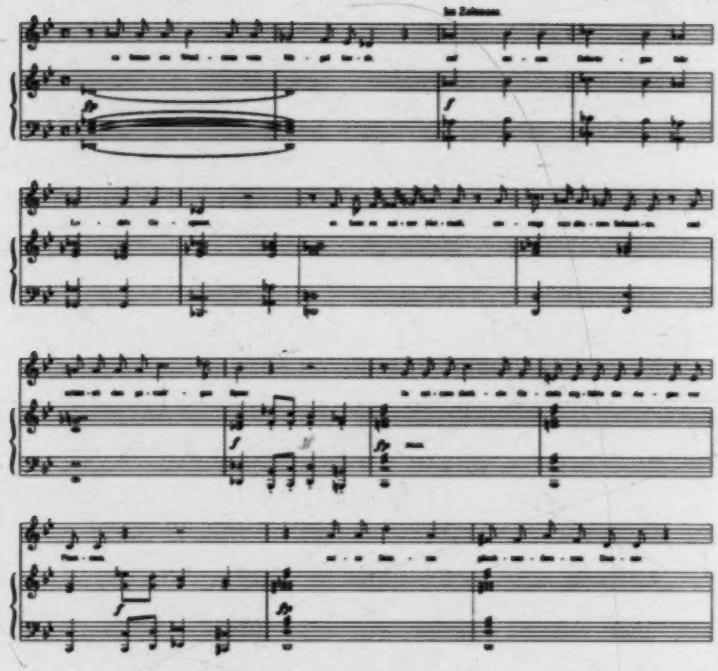
The second example of dramatic ballad, *Der Tod Oscars*, uses text drawn from *Fragment VII*. This passage, also found in *Temora*, was written in prose form. In his extensive liner notes for volume 22 of the *Hyperion Schubert Edition*, Graham Johnson says that this song, "lacks the spellbound atmosphere of *Die Nacht*, the melodic sweep of *Kolmas Klage*, the ghostly evocations of *Lodas Gespenst,* and the sheer symphonic sweep and formal unity of *Cronnan*. But what it does have is the best story" (Johnson 1995: 11). It is the story of two heroes, Dermid and Oscar, so driven by love and honour that they fight each other to the death over Dargo's daughter. Schubert chose to break the continuous piece of prose into eight sections; the continuity of energy from one portion of the text to the next is disrupted because of this episodic musical treatment. In each of the eight sections, there are alternating passages of recitative and arioso, which gives an overall disconnected feeling. Despite having "the best story" it is not difficult to understand Johnson's point of view, one which is echoed to some degree by Reed, who states "the vigour and verve that inform Schubert's earliest solo cantatas seem to be missing in this

last[8] of the Ossian songs" (Reed 1997: 131). Another factor contributing to the relative unpopularity of this work is its prohibitive length. A length of sixteen minutes in performance time almost certainly ensures this is not a regularly programmed work for the ordinary recital; even during Schubert's time, it seems unlikely that listeners would have the patience for such an epic outside of informal domestic settings.

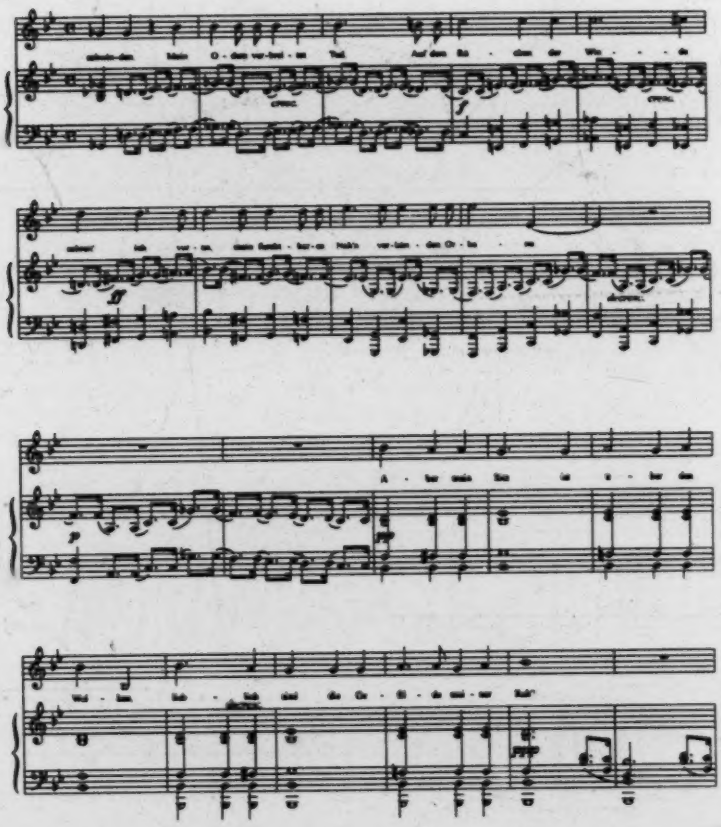
There are two existing fragments of manuscript for the song *Lorma*, the third example of the Ossianic dramatic ballads. The autograph of the first fragment is dated 28 November 1815. It has not been published in either the Peters Edition or the *Neue Schubert Ausgabe*, although it has been completed and was privately published by Reinhard van Hoorickx (Reed 1997: 327). The second fragment, dated 10 February 1816, is published in the *Neue Schubert Ausgabe* and is just fifty-two measures long. Schubert used the same portion of text in both fragments, a small piece of prose from near the end of *The Battle of Lora*. It is a sentimental text describing Lorma's anticipation and disappointment as she awaits Aldo's return from hunting. There was potential for a more dramatic setting had Schubert continued, using the remaining portion of the poem as text; Lorma encounters the ghost of Aldo and consequently dies herself. Despite the existence of what appears to be a promising beginning, Schubert seems to have lost interest in completing this setting.

The stories of battle, the death of war heroes, and angst filled episodes of grief-stricken lovers found in *The Poems of Ossian* ensured that the texts of these songs met the criteria of nineteenth century listeners for being entertaining. How do the musical settings meet

the criteria set out by the texts? While certain instances of text painting have been cited as evidence of an Ossianic manner, no characteristic of these settings has been identified as being significantly unique. Aside from meandering harmonic structure and epic length, characteristics not confined to the Ossian works, very little sets these songs apart from any of Schubert's other epic treatments especially within the category of dramatic ballads, which includes titles such as *Erlkönig*, D. 328; *Liedesend*, D. 473; and *Der Jüngling auf dem Hügel*, D. 702. Now with a nod in the direction of Todd and Daverio's attempts to define 'Ossianic manner,' the settings of dramatic ballads are held up for scrutiny; the elusive quality will be discovered among the various harmonic meanderings and passages of recitative and arioso.

I have singled out *Lodas Gespenst* for closer examination of the conventions Schubert used to highlight the dramatic aspects of this text. Beginning with the marking *Düster*, *Lodas Gespenst* is an excellent example of that which is representative of the severely simple quality which defines the works characterized as dramatic ballads, as it presents examples of, among several other elements, thin texture and uncertain harmony. A good illustration of this is found at m. 20, with a feeling of uneasiness or restlessness in the text, reflected by the marking *Geschwind* and the hesitantly upward-moving melodic line. This austere quality continues to be established by an ambiguous harmonic structure, evidenced by the section of accompanied recitative which begins in m. 46. The cadence in c-flat minor at m. 51 heralds the arrival of the spirit; at this point, the text is describing Fingal's encounter with the spirit of Loda under cover of night.

Example 2: *Lodas Gespenst* m. 46 – m. 60

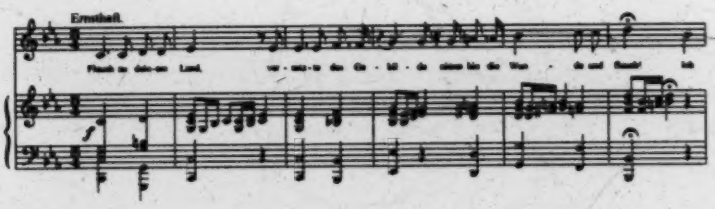
Musically, Schubert illustrates this using a series of diminished seventh chords to briefly tonicize key areas, never remaining in or on any one key for long. The tremolo figure in the piano (mm. 55 – 60) is reflective of the text describing the spirits' eyes with the line "In seinem dunkeln Gesicht glühn seine Augen wie Flammen."[9] After the harmonically ambiguous opening, the lyricism and major tonality of the next section of this work create a completely different mood. This is the voice of Fingal - an example of how Schubert used alternating passages of recitative and arioso to emphasize the presence of other voices. In this part of the song, Fingal is questioning - challenging the spirit of Loda. The music is marked *Ernsthaft* and Johnson suggests that "fear is banished along with any complicated chromatic progressions" (Johnson 1993: 12). The third section marks Loda's reply and begins with a brief recitative, quickly changing to a passage of

arioso in B-flat major, this time marked *Mässig, kraftvoll*. This portion of song is defined by a figure of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes, where the text refers alternately to the spirit's breath and the winds; this rhythmic figure is often found in Scottish folk music.[10]

Example 3: *Lodas Gespenst* m. 108 – m. 129

Harmonically this section is ambiguous, moving through a series of key areas. The unharmonized octaves found in the piano part, suport this sort of chromatic cloudiness, further illustrating the idea of breath and wind. A calm returns to the music as the text

declares "Aber mein Sitz ist über den Wolken, angenehm die Gefilde meiner Ruh"[11] and settles quite clearly into the key of B-flat major.

The next section, marked *Ernsthaft*, presents a simple melodic figure in c minor, related to the previous occurrence of arioso. It is accompanied by a motif in the piano which is reminiscent of horns, war, and/or galloping horses and while this fits with the text, it is also representative of bagpipes and is a figure again sometimes found in folk tunes of Scottish provenance.[12]



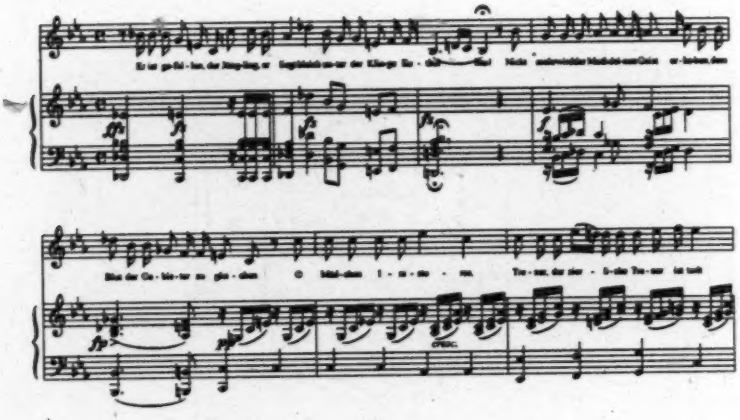
Example 4: *Lodas Gespenst* m. 157 – m. 162

Indeed, there can be little doubt of the significance of this use of motifs, since the text is Loda ordering Fingal, threatening to unleash his wrath if Fingal refuses to comply. However, this motif is found elsewhere in Schubert and does not uniquely identify this music as being "Ossianic" or "Scottish." The ending of *Lodas Gespenst* begins as a sort of recapitulation of the opening, this time in the relative major key, and follows two lengthy portions of recitative which describe a battle between the spirit and Fingal in which his warriors join in and the spirit is thwarted. Happiness and calm abound, musically represented by the marking *Mässig langsam* and the return of a major tonality, this time B-flat major; there is no further threat from the ghost. The song should end at that: the text has a sense of finality and the addition of a strong cadence, such as the one

Schubert provided, lends a suitably final musical counterpart. However, when the song was published in Book 3 of the *Nachlass*, Diabelli once again wielded his editorial pen and significantly altered Schubert's ending. In addition to making changes to the text, he removed Schubert's five measure postlude and attached instead forty-six measures from the trio *Punschlied*. The performance on the *Hyperion Schubert Edition* does not include Diabelli's addition, rather concludes with Schubert's original five measure piano postlude.

Of the ten Ossian settings, three have yet to be examined: *Das Mädchen von Inistore*, D. 281; *Ossians Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos*, D. 278; and *Kolmas Klage*, D. 217. Each of these settings is unique in that it does not fall tidily into any category of Lied. They are among the shortest of Schubert's Ossisan settings. In particular, *Das Mädchen von Inistore* and *Ossians Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos* are each less than three minutes in length. *Das Mädchen von Inistore* is essentially a throughcomposed song, with the hint of recapitulation at the line "O Mädchen Inistores..." in m. 15. This setting is based on a very short and obscure passage from *Fingal* wherein a narrator is telling the Maid of Inistore to grieve because Trenar has died, "His gray dogs are howling at home, and see his passing ghost. His bow is in the hall unstrung..." (Macpherson 1996: 60).[13] It remains a mystery why Schubert would choose such a tiny portion of prose from such an epic work. Reed suggests it is because "the maiden lamenting over the fallen hero was, so to speak, a stock Romantic situation" (Reed 1997: 83). This song is dated from September 1815, situating it within the time frame of other, larger scale Ossian works. Despite its relatively short length, Schubert may have had a larger scale work in mind, as

he used the same conventions in this short work as in some of his lengthier settings. For example, the short section beginning in m. 10 with the line "Er ist gefallen..." may be labeled as accompanied recitative and is used in very much the same way found in other Ossianic works to highlight some dramatic aspect of text. Here, the narrator is telling of Trenar's death:

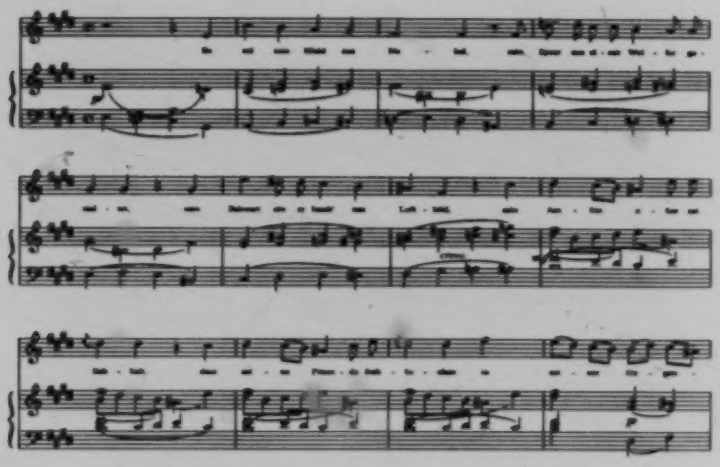


Example 5: *Das Mädchen*...m. 10 – m. 16

Harmonically, this setting is more straightforward than other of the Ossian songs and the melodic line is simply constructed, particularly when compared to the other Ossian settings. However, if Schubert's Ossian songs are to be defined, at least in part, by opaque harmonic structures and melodic conventions, then *Das Mädchen von Inistore* is no exception. Although the piece is written in c minor, there are ambiguous harmonies to be found. For example, there is a strong indication of c minor up to m. 10, but this is followed by a brief period of harmonic instability: m. 10 begins with an E-flat major 4/2 chord, leading to a C major-minor seventh (V7/iv). This is followed in m. 11 by a Neopolitan chord and a diminished seventh on E, which leads to a B-flat major-minor 6/5 (V6/5/bIII) in m. 12. The ambiguous harmony continues in m. 13 with a resolution of

the B-flat chord to E-flat, followed on beat 2 by an A-flat 6/5 chord resolving towards D-flat but never resting there. The following measure (m. 14) begins with a G-flat major triad, which resolves to the D-flat of the previous measure, moving chromatically to C major; m. 15 returns to the stability of c minor. Because of its very short length and somewhat obscure source of text, it is possible this piece was written as an impromptu musical response to a passage encountered by Schubert or one of his friends.

Schubert's second attempt with the Ossian texts is *Ossians Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos*. Although it lacks the epic weight of some of the later ballads, it is a good example of a simple Lied. The text for this song comes from *Dar-Thula* and is a bard's description of his tribute to a fallen chief. In his notes from volume 20 of the *Hyperion Schubert Edition*, Johnson notes this song was written "before the composer had established what was to become his typical Ossian manner" (Johnson 1994: 7). He goes on to state that this song setting "goes to the heart of the nineteenth century's nostalgia for a distant mist-enshrouded past, peopled by savages of a fiery yet noble disposition" (Johnson 1994: 7). This effect is achieved through the simplicity of the setting which is hymn-like both in texture and pace. The melody is uncomplicated and the harmonic structure is almost completely free of the meandering and often complex chromaticism found in the later works, except for the passage beginning in m. 17. Until this point, the song has been in E major and c-sharp minor, but here, Schubert uses a short chromatic passage to represent a feeling of rising tension, paralleled in the text. The text is a soliloquy by Ossian after the death of Nathos, and is a series of descriptions of how the hero should appear in

death. This is accompanied at m. 18 by a rising melodic sequence which contributes to the feeling of tension.

Example 6: *Ossians Lied nach dem Falle*... m. 17 – m. 28

This passage, through liberal use of dominant and diminished seventh chords, serves to obscure the tonality for a period, by briefly tonicizing a series of keys. A dominant pedal, beginning in m. 24, lends an element of suspense to the music, before the harmonic arrival in the key of E major at m. 30. Although Schubert chose a simple form for this setting, he was not content to musically illustrate a text using tidy harmonic and melodic devices: simple forms with equally simple accompaniment figures and easily "sing-able" tunes were the expectation of audiences. *Ossians Lied Nach dem Falle Nathos* and *Das Mädchen von Inistore* are both examples of how Schubert could successfully enhance the complexity of the harmonic structure, while maintaining the simplicity of the basic form.

The last song to warrant discussion here is actually the first Ossian song Schubert wrote. *Kolmas Klage* is dated 22 June 1815 and is a strophic ballad. Reed refers to *Kolmas Klage* as not only the first Ossian setting, but, "the most impressive" (Reed 1997: 297). It has been suggested that musically this setting is based on one titled *Ossian* by Reichardt, written using the same portion of Macpherson's work as text. The text for this song is taken from a lengthy portion of the *Songs of Selma*, published as prose, but which Schubert has chosen to break into three distinct sections. It is a portion narrated by Colma, who is waiting for Salgar at night. She hears voices of warriors and learns Salgar is dead. Colma grieves his death and ultimately dies from her grief. The first section is a curiously rousing opening in the key of c minor, representing the anticipation of Salgar's return mixed with the fear of being alone at night. This is followed by two slow sections in A-flat major, the first describing the return of the warriors and the second describing the grief of Colma. Musically, this leaves the work feeling incomplete, with a feeling of emotional let-down. While Reichardt's setting made use of the complete excerpt, Schubert preferred to leave off with "My dear friends I shall rest forever." With reference to forever, the line has a note of finality, and probably for this reason Schubert chose to end here. However, it does not close the episode as the explanation of the action continues beyond this point. Despite this weakened ending, the song is a good example of a ballad and as pointed out by Reed, has a "misty grandeur which shows how precisely Schubert could identify and characterise the literary quality of his authors" (Reed 1997: 297). For a song which is thought to be so expertly crafted, it is now all but neglected. Even if exemplary of a particular style, because of the premature denouement, it would lead to an anticlimactic feeling if programmed on a recital of Lieder today.

Listeners to Schubert's Ossian songs had their expectations foiled. Through the compositions of the composers of the First Berlin School, and later, the Second Berlin School, listeners had come to expect certain elements from Lied compositions: simple melodic structures in identifiable forms, paired with uncomplicated harmonic and rhythmic structures. They expected nice songs that could be performed by anyone with a reasonable amount of musical skill. What they got at the hands of Schubert was a genre significantly altered from its humble beginnings. The simple structures and pretty tunes were replaced by unpredictable and often unconventional elements, which could only be described as "compositional ploys." There can be no doubt that Schubert was aware of what he was producing. At least on some level he knew what his audience liked and wanted and he addressed this with his choice of texts. However, he also realized he could challenge his listeners musically. He did this by presenting them with unpredictable forms, lyric melodies harmonized in unconventional ways, extensive use of chromaticism, harmonic structures that undercut tonal security, and more. By subverting their expectations, he was able to present a genre not fixed in its characteristics, but defined by its changeability.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

[1] In fact, the concept of simple, accessible tunes may have been familiar to listeners before the "reign" of the First Berlin School, at least in some parts of Germany. See LeBar, Ann. "The Domestication of Vocal Music in Enlightenment Hamburg." *Journal of Musicological Research* 19 (1999): 1 – 38.

[2] A discrepancy in the spelling of the name Shilric will be noted throughout; Shilric is how the name is found in the work of Macpherson.

[3] Hints of cyclic process may be seen here, although this is not an aspect of the music which will be explored at this time.

[4] There is a possibility Schubert had a large scale work in mind. *Cronnan, Shilrik und Vinvela,* and *Lodas Gespenst* are all based on portions of *Carric-Thura.* Richard Cappel goes so far as to state "What all these compositions pointed to was Schubert's readiness, fired as he was by the mysterious Caledonian posey, to compose an opera about Ossian's heroes, if only a man of letters in his circle had thought of casting one of the campaigns or disasters into dramatic form for him" (Cappel 1957: 93).

[5] (Shilric)But is it she that there appears, like a beam of light on the heath? bright as the moon in autumn, as the sun in summer storm, comst thou, lovely maid, over rocks, over mountains to me? – She speaks: but how weak her voice! like the breeze in the reeds of the pool.

(Vinvela)Returnst thou safe from the war? Where are thy friends, my love? I heard of thy death on the hill; I heard and mourned thee, Shilric (Macpherson 1996: 160)!

[6] (Opening-Shilric)I sit by the mossy fountain on the top of the hill of the dark winds. One tree is rustling above me. Dark waves roll over the heath. The lake is troubled below. The deer descend from the hill. No hunter at a distance is seen. It is mid-day, but all is silent around (Macpherson 1996: 159-60)!

(Ending-Shilric)By the mossy fountain I will sit, on the top of the hill of winds. When mid-day is silent around. O talk with me, Vinvela! Come on the light-winged gale! On the breeze of the desert, come! Let me hear thy voice, as thou passest, when mid-day is silent (Macpherson 1996: 160).

[7] Howard Gaskill explores the concept of the "joy of grief" and the impact of Macpherson and *The Poems of Ossian* on literature in Germany (he is particularly concerned with the work of Karl Philipp Moritz) in his article, "The 'Joy of Grief':

Moritz and Ossian" (1995). In recent correspondence to me, Mr. Gaskill has indicated this is an area requiring further study; there are several works forthcoming.

[8] On page 131, Reed States, with reference to *Der Tod Oscars*, "... this last of the Ossian songs." On page 175, with reference to *Die Nacht*, Reed States "*Die Nacht* is Schubert's last ... attempt to exploit the popular appeal of the Ossian myths." *Der Tod Oscars* is dated from February 1816, while *Die Nacht* is dated form February 1817.

[9] His eyes appear like flames in his dark face (Macpherson 1996: 161).

[10] While the figure commonly referred to as a "Scotch Snap" is made up of a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth, this figure is also commonly found, particularly in *piobaireachd*. See Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980. S. v. "Scotland II: Folk Music, instrumental," by Francis Collinson.

[11] But my dwelling is calm, above the clouds; the fields of my rest are pleasant (Macpherson 1996: 161).

[12] This figure, of an eighth note followed by two sixteenths, is also commonly found in the traditional music of Scotland. See Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980. S. v. "Scotland II: Folk Music, instrumental," by Francis Collinson.

[13] Found in *Fingal Book I*.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> Night is dull and dark. The clouds rest on the hills. No star with green trembling beam; no moon looks from the sky. I hear the blast in the wood; but I hear it distant far. The stream of the valley murmurs; but its murmur is sullen and sad. From the tree at the grave of the dead the long-howling owl is heard. I see a dim form on the plain!—It is a ghost!—it flies. Some funeral shall pass this way: the meteor marks the path.
>
> - Ossian "Croma: A Poem," 190

The Ossian songs of Schubert are not frequently discussed; when they are, they are dismissed, not because they are unimportant, but because there is a perception that they are different from Schubert's other Lieder. Often, as pointed out by Fiske, when the Ossian songs are mentioned at all "they are dismissed in a sentence which says only that they are immature, and too long" (Fiske 1983: 83). Noting the length and subject matter of these songs, it seems, at a cursory glance, that this would be true. However, these are not especially good reasons to blithely dismiss these songs. Of course, because they are Lieder, the texts play as integral role as the musical setting. The task of unraveling the mysteries of these texts is daunting; the researcher runs the risk of becoming mired in the gloom of Celtic mythology. Divested – inasmuch as is possible – of this mystery and examined as musical settings of interesting texts, they are not any more remarkable than other of Schubert's efforts. However, how does one account for the disparity between the early enthusiasm of Schubert's peers and the dismissal that happened later on?

The Ossian settings of Schubert were once well regarded; as Fiske points out, "just after Schubert's death they were being placed among his masterpieces" (Fiske 1983: 83). In Chapter 3 above, Spaun's remarks on the Ossian songs were discussed. In particular, his pointing out to Goethe "these last [the Ossian songs] excelling all the others" was the remark of someone who believed Schubert's Ossian compositions to be great. Of course, this quote often surfaces with reference to these songs as if it alone stands as proof of the "goodness." Although Spaun's remark is the most oft quoted, he was not the only of Schubert's colleagues to have such an opinion. Sonnleithner, writing in 1867, stated:

> I strongly advocated the publication of the Ossian songs, which attracted me greatly... Diabelli also recognized the excellent qualities of these noble tone poems, but their unsuitability for private performance made him doubtful. What disturbed him most was the way *Lodas Gespenst*... closes with an extended recitative... According to Schubert's manuscript, this was the end of the whole song, and Diabelli did not see how a long vocal piece with so indefinite a conclusion could be performed (Fiske 1983: 86).

The acknowledged unsuitability for performance is something which I have not previously remarked upon, but requires a brief examination here as it directly relates to the modern reception of Schubert's settings.

There are at least two very clear reasons for this unsuitability for performance: one has to do with venue and the other with reception, both are dependent on audience. As with any trend, enthusiasm can begin to sag and passions get redirected to the next trend. This can be said for the social gatherings which formed the mission of groups like the Bildung Circle. By the time Diabelli was ready to publish Schubert's Lieder, these gatherings were less central and a useful performance venue was lost. Certainly by the time Sonnleithner made his

remarks in 1867, recitals were the domain of more formal settings. The informal gatherings in salons had offered a venue less restricted by stringent rules for audience members and this no doubt offered listeners the opportunity to relieve their ennui, should they feel so inclined. At more than ten minutes in performance time for most of the settings, they hardly lent themselves to informal parlour gatherings where the aspect of social gathering was at least as important as the musical offerings, much less a formal recital where the audience was expected to sit quietly; this holds especially true for gatherings and recitals occurring long after Ossian and all the contributing *ethos* had faded from vogue and there was not longer an interest in discussing the settings. Today, the Ossian songs of Schubert are quite simply not performed and are only infrequently recorded.

While some of Schubert's peers very much delighted in his settings of Macpherson's texts, modern reception is clouded and certainly less than enthusiastic. Today, ask any aficionado of Schubert about the Ossian songs, and if he is even familiar with them, it is almost certain he will turn up his nose. The enthusiasm for the aesthetic of the Ossian poems waned and with it, enthusiasm for the song settings of Schubert. Instead of examples of the "joy of grief," today these songs are at best viewed as examples of a passé aesthetic. However, we can not ignore that Schubert's peers regarded these works to some degree. The Ossian settings date from a time when Schubert composed other works which continue to be widely regarded and certainly not considered to be immature: for

example, portions of *Heidenröslein*, *Erlkönig*, and *Symphony No. 3* all date from 1815. The Ossian songs date from 1815 and 1817 and there is no doubt that he composed many other great examples of Lieder during that time. Certainly it would not be valid to extrapolate from this, that the Ossian songs are great because they were written during the same period as other of Schubert's great works. Nor is it valid to assume the songs are inferior based on the one unique feature which separates these settings from all of Schubert's other Lieder – the text. *The Poems of Ossian* were very widely popular, as discussed above in Chapter 2. As epics, they stood as exaggerated examples of the aesthetic coveted by armchair travelers of nineteenth century Germany and beyond. There is no doubt that it was this enthusiasm for the poems which fueled the enthusiasm for the song settings. By setting the poems to music, Schubert was providing his friends with yet another point of access to these texts, another manner in which they were able to explore and feed their enthusiasm for – among other things – the "joy of grief."

As I briefly mentioned above, the musical settings of the Ossian texts provided fans of this poetry with a second access point – another way for them to examine and/or experience the aesthetic so coveted and found so abundantly in these poems. However, after examining Schubert's musical settings in Chapter 4, I believe it is possible to conclude that these songs are no more musically significant than any other of Schubert's Lieder. In fact, as examples of dramatic settings, the Ossian songs fail to present any vestige of unity from a dramatic

point of view. The text choices seem to have been indiscriminately taken from much larger works without concern for context. Musically, the works also lack cohesion. While there are moments of beautiful melody highlighted by Schubert's characteristic chromatic harmonies, the lyric moments are sparse and infrequent; the compositions, in general, lack consistent energy to draw the listener in and engage them to the end of these epic settings. Furthermore, while Schubert did use certain compositional devices to highlight the text, they are not in any way different from those he uses to heighten affect in other compositions; there is no "Ossianic manner" in these works by Schubert. But such an evaluation applies musical standards of unity that the cultural context I have sketched here suggests are simply inappropriate – neither abstract musical coherence nor a consistent exoticist manner were the goals of the circle in which they were created. Instead, the Ossian settings were to provide vivid dramatic realizations of texts that exercised their own strong appeal to a group of idealistic youth.

While the gentlemen of the Bildung Circle were outwardly concerned with bettering themselves and society through study, there can be no doubt they were well informed and concerned with fads or trends. James Macpherson and his *The Poems of Ossian* represent such a trend. Schubert's settings served to bring portions of these highly evocative texts to a suggestive audience at a time when the texts were considered to be vogue. By the time Diabelli came to publish the Ossian songs, Macpherson had been widely accepted as a fraud and interest in Ossian had tapered dramatically. Howard Gaskill points out:

> its impact was certainly in no small part due to its epic and historical pretensions. Divested of these, as it eventually was, it would have lost some of its antiquarian interest and a good deal of its usefulness for literary and cultural polemic (Gaskill 1994: 668).

This is also applies to Schubert's Ossian songs. They served a purpose at the time they were composed. When examined today, these settings can be seen as Schubert's response to a greater cultural phenomenon – alternatively the last vestiges of the *Sturm und Drang* movement or the beginnings of the Romantic movement.

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APPENDIX A

WORKS BY JAMES MACPHERSON

1755 'To a Friend, mourning the Death of Miss...'. *Scots Magazine*, xvii, 249.

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